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INSIDE



Closed Studio

The Walt Disney Co. is shuttering its Orlando, Fla.-based animation studio, cutting about 258 jobs, as the company shifts from hand-drawn animated films to computer-generated features and videos.

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Peace Talks

Formal peace talks between the government and communist rebels are set to resume next month at an unspecified foreign venue, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said Tuesday.

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Hash Runners

At a jungle in Marpi, over 40 hash runners scrambled through a tangle of vines, tree branches and steep banks as they followed unseen trails leading to the Wing Beach, much like restless hounds on the scent of frightened hares.

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Gas prices up by 7 cents

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Shell outlets on Saipan and Guam raised beginning last midnight the prices of its petroleum products by seven cents per gallon—the first fuel price hike this year.

Shell Marianas, Inc. announced the price increase yesterday, but assured that

it would try to roll back gas prices once market conditions improve.

Shell Marianas president Phil Stalker said market forces in Singapore triggered the increase in pump prices, citing tight supply.

“The Singapore market has recently seen extremely strong demand particularly from Japan and China. This, combined with tight supply, seems to be forcing prices on refined gasoline

products sharply higher,” Stalker said.

“The net result has been a significant increase in our cost of refined product for our market,” he added.

Shell Marianas on Guam was contacted yesterday afternoon, but Stalker was unavailable for an interview regarding fuel supply in the region.

In August last year, Rota experienced shortage in fuel supply due to shipment problems, exhausting the island’s fuel

stock. Gas retailers on the island—not Shell—had to implement gas rationing for a few days, as motorists waited in long lines to gas up their vehicles.

Stalker said the 7-cent increase applies to all forms of gasoline and diesel fuel on Saipan and Guam.

Dave, a customer at the Shell gas station in Middle Road, Gualo Rai, said he was surprised when told about Shell’s

See GAS on Page 8



LIBERTY DONES

A three-member team from the U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention, led by Dr. Mark Keim, second right, is on Saipan to assist local authorities in drafting a public health emergency response plan. The team holds a weeklong workshop at Aqua Resort Club. From right: Commonwealth Ports Authority’s Stanley Torres Jr., DPH medical director Dr. Richard Brostrom, CDC operations research scientist Paul Giannone, Keim, and DPH spokesperson John P. Douglas.

CDC, NMI are developing public health emergency response plan

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

A team from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is currently on island to help develop a local public health emergency response plan.

CDC medical officer Dr. Mark E.

Keim said his team focuses on “what to do” after disasters such as typhoon, flooding, and tsunami.

He said that while local authorities may have already known the “must-do” during or after these emergencies, the CNMI still lacks a public health plan to guide concerned agencies.

Such plan, he said, would ensure efficient coordination among key agencies such as the Department of Public Health, Emergency Management Office, Department of Public Safety, the Commonwealth Ports Authority, and others.

“That’s why it’s not so much about

See CDC on Page 8

Four minors nabbed for curfew violation

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Four minors were arrested in the wee hours of Sunday morning after causing a disturbance in Chalan Kanoa while curfew hours were in effect. The four are now facing three charges, including curfew violation.

DPS spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said a resident near the Glory Market in Chalan Kanoa reported a disturbance around 3:45am Sunday.

Law enforcers were immediately dispatched to CK to investigate. Responding police officers caught four minors—between 14 to 16 years old—fleeing the scene.

Investigators said that due to their age, their condition at the time of the arrest, and the hour of their apprehension, the minors were taken into police custody.

According to reports, the four were found to be under the influence of alcohol.

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Garapan Promenade project begins

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Construction activities for the nearly \$4-million Garapan pedestrian mall project began yesterday, resulting in the closure of portions of the Third Street.

The road closure initially covers the first two blocks of the street from Beach Road: from Famous Shoes corner to Levis Shop corner.

Workers said demolition work

See GARAPAN on Page 8

Local

Safety measures shield NMI vs SARS

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Despite recent reports of new severe acute respiratory syndrome cases in China, the Babauta administration is not worried about the possible entry of the disease into the Commonwealth as measures have been put in place to screen out the disease.

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente said that China Southern Air, the only airline that provides direct charter flights between the CNMI and China, is now

conducting screening activities before allowing people onboard the plane, based on a request of the CNMI government.

“There are some steps that we’ve taken and I understand that some of these steps that we have asked the charter flights [from China] to do are already being done. Anyway, these steps are already being done in China, such as screening before departure. This is something that we have recommended to the [Tinian] Dynasty [Hotel and Casino] and they have been

doing that,” said Benavente.

The charter flights are in collaboration with the Tinian-based hotel.

Benavente said the issue is being addressed and the level of concern over the disease is not as high as before due to a better understanding of the disease and its mode of transmission, as well as a more extensive databank on effective ways of controlling it.

“We have been handling it. Our [Public Health] Secretary, Dr. [James U.] Hofschneider, has raised this concern from the time

that the change arose in China but, at this point, with the technology and the new understanding of SARS, a lot more people are comfortable about it than back in last spring when it first came out,” he said.

An Associate Press report quoted unnamed Chinese authorities as saying that they have one confirmed and two suspected SARS cases, all of them in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, which also includes Shenzhen. Shenzhen borders Hong Kong,

which is screening people who cross the border in hopes of keeping out the flu-like disease.

At this stage, Benavente said there is no need to post DPH personnel at the CNMI’s various points of entry to conduct screening activities. “The Secretary is comfortable with just the recommendation that they [passengers] are pre-screened before they board the planes.”

Severe acute respiratory syndrome emerged in Guangdong in late 2002 and

sickened more than 8,000 people worldwide before subsiding in June. The disease killed 774 people.

At the height of the disease’s spread, the DPH posted health personnel at the Saipan International Airport to check passengers’ temperatures. Visitors were also asked to fill out a questionnaire that asked them their recent travel itinerary. These measures were soon dropped after incidences of the disease died down.



Benavente

Re-hiring of nonresident DPW engineers okayed until 2005

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta has approved the hiring extension of nonresident professionals, mostly engineers, working at the Department of Public Works for two more years.

Babauta signed into law Monday Senate Bill 13-157, which amends 3 CMC Section 4434 to allow the DPW to hire nonresident professionals for technical and professional positions until Sept. 30, 2005.

But the governor, in his communication to the Legislature confirming his enactment of Public Law 13-62, noted that DPW must make sure that no more hiring extension be made after 2005 by intensifying its efforts in developing its local workforce.

“I strongly urge, however, that the DPW endeavor to achieve full compliance with the mandate of P.L. 12-34, that a plan be implemented to educate and train local residents to replace these nonresident workers. I trust that no further extensions will be required and that the transition to a local workforce will become one of the primary objectives of the department,” said Babauta.

The department was previously allowed by law to retain its nonresident professional staff up to Sept. 30, 2003.

There are six nonresident engineers and one architect whose contracts with DPW’s Technical Services Division had expired September last year.

Babauta said he approved the extension “for the sole purpose of preventing any delays or disruptions to the completion of ongoing capital improvement projects, especially the Commonwealth Health Center’s Hemodialysis Center.”

The senate earlier approved the measure for lack of qualified resident workers to take over the positions as well as budgetary constraints.

DPW Secretary Juan S. Reyes earlier acknowledged that the department was not yet ready financially and skills-wise to replace its foreign workers holding technical positions.

He has said that there were seven technical positions held by nonresidents and five positions being held by U.S. citizens and local residents in the division.

Reyes has also said that the department would need an increased budget for employees’ wages, if it would like to attract and retain local and U.S. professionals.

“It will be very difficult, if not impossible, to meet the requirements of Public Law 12-34 as currently stated. It is not practical to replace the professional nonresident workers by on-the-job training of local technicians,” Reyes had said.

“Also, the salary funding levels in [the] TSD’s operations budget are too low to attract [US] mainland-based architects and engineers.”

Reyes has said that his office has come up with a proposed education and training plan in line with the intent of PL 12-34.

He said the plan consists of three parts:

- Develop a recruitment program to hire professional engineers and architects locally if available, and if not, from the US mainland;
- Develop an internship program that utilizes college students to perform summer work with [the] DPW, leading to a full-time employment position after graduation; and
- Develop an on-the-job training for local hire technicians to increase their skill levels.

Meantime, the 13th CNMI Legislature approved early this month a joint resolution approving 19 more full-time employee slots for DPW to enable the department to fulfill its obligations under the Workforce Investment Agency training agreements in various areas of public service.

tribune ad
pls. pick up neg

‘Actuarial study needed to see impact of RIAA’

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The NMI Retirement Fund is now in the process of having an actuarial study done on the impact that the Retirement Integrity Assurance Act will have on the Fund’s financial status, according to Fund administrator Karl T. Reyes.

Reyes said the Fund has already received a quotation

from Mellon Human Resources and Investor Solutions for the conduct of the study that would give the Fund’s Board of Trustees a concrete idea of the changes that the Act will have on the government’s retirement program and the benefits it will accrue with the bill’s passage.

Reyes declined to specify how much Mellon is asking for it to conduct the study but he mentioned

during last Friday’s board meeting that the cost could range between \$7,500 and \$10,000.

This comes soon after Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed into law last Dec. 5 Public Law 13-60, which was crafted mainly to remove unfunded liabilities in the retirement program, and, in the process, enhance the financial solvency and viability of the Fund.

“We have to have the actuarial

study done because it’s called for in the law, that it [Act] has to be reviewed by professionals as to what’s the impact of this one: the savings for the Retirement Fund and for the government. Maybe, with all these changes, the government would be able to reduce its present employer contribution of 24 percent,” said Reyes yesterday.

Mellon describes itself in its website as a group of employee benefit consultants and actuaries operating in 50 offices in 15 countries around the world. It offers advise on all aspects of the provision

and implementation of employee benefits for staff in corporations, local government departments and non-profit institutions.

Mellon HR&IS used to be Buck Consultants and Buck Healthcare, which were fused in Oct this year to become the Human Resources and Investor Solutions sector of Mellon.

The board has not made a decision yet whether to award the contract to Mellon.

Among others, the recently enacted Act provides the merging of Class I and Class II retirement categories; penalties

for the early withdrawal of Retirement Fund contributions; and the adoption of the U.S. Social Security System’s cost of living allowance model.

Besides eliminating all unfunded liability, Gov. Juan N. Babauta had earlier said that this comprehensive measure will also relieve the government from the burden of having to allocate a substantial portion of its revenue to the Fund, and permit the government to divert the necessary resources to pay for essential services for the benefit of the general public,” Babauta said.

Last suspect in Ling Lin robbery falls

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Police arrested the last suspect in the Ling Lin Store robbery, following simultaneous raids on several suspected hideouts in As Lito yesterday afternoon, the Department of Public Safety said.

Found in an abandoned house in As Lito was Fernando B. Quitano, who has been the subject of a manhunt since law enforcers arrested his two other cohorts in the October 31, 2003 heist.

DPS spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr. said members of the Thief Apprehension Select Coalition have been visiting several hotspots where the suspects was last seen including family members, relatives, and friends’ houses.

During a follow-up operation at 2pm yesterday, TASC team received information of a possible

hideout. The group raided an abandoned house in As Lito where they found Quitano hiding.

Quitano, who was the last suspect in the Ling Lin Store robbery case, was immediately placed under arrest and was brought to the Adult Correctional facility where he is currently detained.

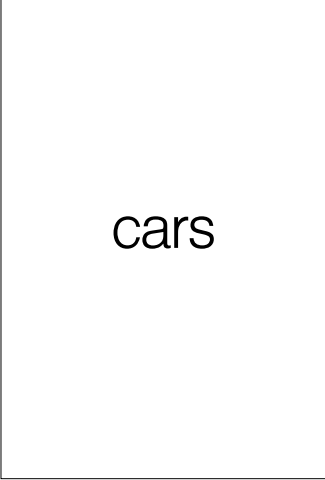
Blas said appropriate charges were lodged against the suspect in connection with the robbery incident. Police earlier apprehended his two other cohorts—who were identified as minors.

According to the reports, Quitano along with the two others suspects, entered the Ling Lin Store in Chalan Kanoa barged inside the establishment and sprayed a pepper mace onto the face of the cashier. They allegedly stole an undisclosed amount of cash and fled.

Members of the TASC team

were able to track down and identify the suspects in this case. On Nov. 17, 2003, Judge Kenneth Govendo issued an arrest warrant for the three suspects.

The NMI Crime Stoppers earlier asked the community to help them locate Quitano.



Drug offender gets 18 months

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The Superior Court yesterday sentenced to 18 months in prison a woman who was involved in one of the biggest illegal drug seizures in the CNMI.

Associate Judge David Wiseman imposed the sentence on Melody Shimabukuro, who had earlier pleaded guilty to a charge of illegal possession of methamphetamine hydrochloride or “ice.” The judge also imposed a \$1,000-fine against her.

The court gave credit for the time the woman had already served in jail, which totaled 17 months and three days. This means that Shimabukuro will only need to spend less then a month to complete serving her sentence.

Shimabukuro is the wife of Wayne Shimabukuro, whom the AGO had earlier

slapped with drug possession and trafficking charges.

The AGO said that, when the CNMI-Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force served a search warrant at the Shimabukuro residence on Saipan on Aug. 15, 2002, it seized over 370 grams of ice.

Task force agents also seized from the Shimabukuro residence scales, packaging materials, approximately \$7,000 in cash, and documents, added the AGO. Operatives nabbed the Shimabukuro couple.

While Melody had owned up to a drug charge pursuant to a plea agreement, her husband vigorously contested the charges against him and requested that the Superior Court suppress tape-recorded evidence pertaining to his conversation with a task force agent. According to CNMI chief prosecutor David Hutton, Wayne Shimabukuro admitted in the conversation his involvement in large-scale drug trade.

CUC insists on using own procurement rules

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. insists that it can freely use its own procurement regulations in its proposed desalination project amid a warning from the Attorney General’s Office, citing the lack of a law that would prevent the CUC from doing so.

In a Jan. 6, 2004 letter to the Office of the Public Auditor, CUC board chairman Herman P. Sablan cited the OPA’s “over emphasis” on the AGO’s opinion when the AGO, in fact, is not the court that interprets the laws.

“At present, there’s no law limiting the powers of CUC to conduct its own procurement under its own procurement rules and regulations...these were duly promulgated pursuant to existing CNMI laws....thus the same could be said that until the court (not the AG’s office) says that these are of no legal force and effect, CUC has no choice but to follow what’s legally in place at the present time,” said Sablan.

“After all, it is the court and not the AG’s office which interprets the laws. So with all due respect to the AG’s office, CUC must continue to follow what is legally in place until such time that the court says otherwise,” he added.

The OPA earlier cited in its preliminary report the AGO’s opinion specifically warning the CUC of legal consequences over its use of its own rules amid efforts by the government to impose a uniform procurement regulations.

The CUC board chairman’s position came even as CUC in-house legal counsel Kay Delafield previously advised the CUC board to strictly comply

with the directive issued by the AGO on procurement rules to avoid related risks.

“CUC must immediately make a decision as to whether it will comply with the directive or not. I strongly recommend that CUC does comply with the directive for the present,” said Delafield in a memorandum to the board in November 2003.

She said that compliance “does not cause harm to the corporation and does not prevent CUC from challenging the directive if it chooses to do so.”

On the other hand, she warned that “non-compliance or ignoring the AGO’s instruction presents greater risks,” adding that the utility firm cannot expect the Attorney General’s Office to approve CUC contracts that do not follow CNMI procurement regulations.

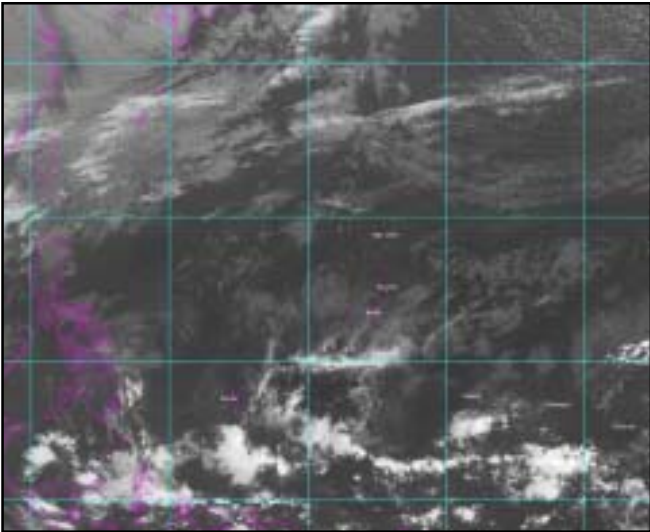
All CUC contracts require the signature of the AG.

The AGO has required all government agencies, including autonomous agencies such as the CUC, to follow only the procurement regulations of the Department of Finance pending the enactment of a new procurement legislation.

Then acting AG Clyde Lemons, who personally attended a CUC board meeting last November, asked the CUC board to delay its procurement transactions unless they have been reviewed by the DoF.

The CUC intends to put up—through a build-operate-transfer scheme—a 3 MGD desalination plant on Saipan, which both the OPA and the House committee on public utilities, transportation, and communications have recommended to be cancelled due to CUC’s “tainted” and “critically flawed” actions.

WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 P.M., JANUARY 13, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough extends from near 1n130e to eq165e. Trade wind convergence north of the trough is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms south of yap between the equator and 7n from 137e to 146e. Another area of trade wind showers is located south of Chuuk within 80 miles either side of a line from 4n151e to 1n162e. A surface trough of low pressure along 169e is producing scattered showers in the Marshall Islands between the equator and 11n from 166e to 174e. Extensive low clouds with showers are across the Mariana Islands between 11n and 16n from 140e to 152e.



SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15 mph.



GUAM AND ROTA
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15 mph.



PALAU
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast 10-15 kt.



POHNPEI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast 10-15 kt.



KOSRAE
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



MAJURO
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.

	CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
	Auckland	Partly Cloudy	76F (24C)	61F (16C)
	Beijing	Sunny	38F (3C)	21F (-6C)
	Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	66F (19C)	53F (12C)
	Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82F (28C)	70F (21C)
	London, England	Partly Cloudy	47F (8C)	36F (2C)
	Los Angeles	Sunny	69F (21C)	51F (11C)
	Manila	Partly Cloudy	88F (31C)	73F (23C)
	Melbourne	Sunny	81F (27C)	56F (13C)
	Miami	Partly Cloudy	73F (23C)	58F (14C)
	New York City	Partly Cloudy	22F (-6C)	12F (-11C)
	Osaka	Partly Cloudy	43F (6C)	18F (-8C)
	Paris	Rain	43F (6C)	33F (1C)
	Pusan	Partly Cloudy	33F (1C)	23F (-5C)
	Rome	Cloudy	61F (16C)	51F (11C)
	Salem, Oregon	Rain	52F (11C)	42F (6C)
	San Francisco	Cloudy	58F (14C)	49F (9C)
	Seoul	Partly Cloudy	25F (-4C)	12F (-11C)
	Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	50F (10C)	30F (-1C)
	Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	36F (2C)	23F (-5C)

Compact impact report for FY '04 in the works

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The Department of Commerce is now preparing a comprehensive Compact impact assessment report for the current fiscal year in preparation for the expected release of the CNMI's share in the \$30-million Compact impact payments allotted for this year.

The report is expected to be finished in two weeks' time, or by Jan. 21.

This comes in the wake of the recent passage of the renegotiated Compacts of Free Association that the United States signed with the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands in mid-December last year.

Among others, U.S. Public Law 108-188 provides for \$30 million that would be paid to Hawaii and the insular territories—American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Marianas—each fiscal year for 20 years, as payment for the social costs associated with the immigration of citizens from the Freely Associated States to these areas. The money, totaling \$600 million, would be spread out at \$30 million for each fiscal year from 2004 until 2023.

No schedule has been set, though, as to when the money would be released. The Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs has been tasked to administer the awarding of the money, which would be in the form of a grant.

While waiting for the DOI to issue the regulations, policies, and procedures applicable to these grants, Gov. Juan N. Babauta said that now

is the right time to start preparing the Compact impact report, which would surely be needed when the time comes to access this money.

In a memorandum to Commerce Secretary Fermin Atalig dated Jan. 7, 2004, Babauta asked the official to prepare the report for the current fiscal year, in a form and methodology similar to compact impact assessments prepared in previous years by the CNMI government.

"Although the Office of Insular Affairs has not issued any...procedures applicable to these grants, it is reasonable to expect that the required documentation will be similar to reports the CNMI has previously compiled on this matter," said Babauta.

As to how the annual \$30 million is going to be divvied up, the Interior Secretary is required to provide for a census of qualified nonimmigrants in the CNMI, Guam, Hawaii, and American Samoa beginning this fiscal year and in calendar years 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. The Interior Secretary will then divide the annual funding to each of the governments of the CNMI, Guam, Hawaii, and American Samoa, using an equation based on the results of the most recent enumeration. The census would count citizens of FSM, Marshall Islands, and Palau, which had signed a separate CFA with the United States.

Because of this, Babauta asked Atalig to leave this variable unassigned in his preliminary report until OIA provides the relevant number.

Babauta also pointed out

that, under the new law, the money could only be used for health, educational, social, or public safety services so it would make sense to confine Atalig's assessment to these operational costs. "It is not necessary that you [Atalig] assess the impact of immigration on infrastructure."

The governor urged Atalig to complete the report within the next two weeks, stressing the project's importance as the OIA is expected to announce the availability of the Compact impact grant funds in the near future.

"I am also requesting that the heads of all relevant government agencies and instrumentalities, particularly the departments of Public Health, Public Safety, Community and Cultural Affairs, and all engaged in education, to cooperate with you [Atalig] in your effort," Babauta added.

The new Compacts also provide that a year after—and at one-year intervals thereafter—the CNMI governor must provide the Interior Secretary by Feb. 1 of each year comments on the impacts of the renegotiated compact on the Commonwealth. The Interior Secretary, in turn, must report to Congress not later than May 1 of each year the governor's comments and the administration's analysis of such impact.

If the new compact agreements result in any adverse consequences to the CNMI, Guam, Hawaii, or American Samoa, the U.S. Congress promises "to act sympathetically and expeditiously to redress those adverse consequences."



ROTA COUNCILMEN

EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

Rota Municipal Council officials, from left, Patrick Manglona, Edwin Aldan, and Jude Hofschneider pose with Gov. Juan N. Babauta after their oath-taking ceremony Monday morning at the Saipan and Northern Island Municipal Council in Chalan Kanoa.

Crime Stoppers seeks help on arson case

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER



The NMI Crime Stoppers is seeking the help of the community in resolving the recent arson incident in Chalan Kanoa where six to seven minors were seen fleeing after setting a vehicle on fire.

NMI Crime Stoppers coordinator Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr. urged individuals who may have additional information on the arson case to contact the anti-crime advocacy group.

"We have information on this arson case but we still urge individuals who may have additional information to call the Crime Stoppers' tips line at 234-7272," said Blas.

The Crime Stoppers is an

anti-crime group that works hand-in-hand with law enforcement agencies to help reduce the number of criminal activities in the CNMI. The group gives out rewards of up to \$1,000 for information leading to arrests and the recovery of stolen items.

According to investigators, witnesses saw six to seven minors fleeing the scene of a fire incident Friday morning, where a vehicle appeared to have been intentionally set on fire at the Pacific Drilling Ltd. barracks near the U.S. Postal Office.

Police officers and firefighters were dispatched to the site after vehicle owner Kaibeer M. Abamed, 37, reported the incident to authorities.

According to the complainant, he parked his car at

the area around 10:30pm Thursday and went to his room to rest.

Several hours later, he heard loud popping noises, prompting him to check the immediate premises. He then saw his vehicle, a 1993 Hyundai Excel with license plate ABX-944, on fire.

With the help of friends, the victim was able to extinguish the fire before it could spread to the other structures in the area. The vehicle sustained extensive damage.

According to Blas, no arrest has been made yet but investigation is ongoing. He said individuals who may have additional information about the incident could also call the Thief Apprehension Select Coalition and the Criminal Investigation Bureau at 664-9042.

century travel

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Drug plan needs this fix

When he signs a bill today purported to help seniors afford prescription drugs, President Bush is expected to hail it as the biggest step forward for Medicare since the program's 1965 inception. In fact, it is a needlessly complex and unaffordable mess of concessions to one special interest after another. Ramrodded through Congress after only a few early-morning hours of debate, it will offer meager benefits to most seniors.

Once the bill is signed, Congress can still fix it around the edges, and House Democrats will make a good start today. They plan to introduce legislation to correct the bill's most shameful flaw: a provision, added at the drug industry's request, that prohibits Medicare from using its immense bargaining clout to reduce prescription prices.

The Bush administration officials who helped write the bill—foremost among them Medicare and Medicaid Director Tom Scully, who is now mulling over a lucrative job offer from the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America—say such bargaining would lead to price fixing. Sounds like Scully has already switched allegiances. Such negotiating over prices has been key to helping numerous government agencies—such as state Medicaid programs and the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs—keep the lid on drug costs.

The government bureaucrats negotiating such deals are not fixing prices in some antique socialist scheme. They are playing hardball in a global economy, competing against Canada and other nations that marshal their power to negotiate the best prices for their citizens.

If Bush wants to ensure that the bill is more benefit than boondoggle, he should endorse the Democratic bill. Surely he can see that if the government isn't going to help control costs, then it has no business stopping the free market from doing so.

Los Angeles Times



Century in, century out—It's crusade time

For 14 centuries, Christians and Muslims have waged a series of conquests and crusades. And while we know who started the fighting, we don't know who will end it. The one safe bet is that America's current crusade in the Middle East will not be the last.

It's worth pointing out, of course, that the Muslims "started it." In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Arabs, fired by their new Islamic faith, burst out of the Arabian Peninsula. They swept across the mostly Christian Middle East, eager to conquer and convert. Their general, Tariq ibn-Ziyad, crossed into Spain from North Africa in 711. It's from him that the Rock of Gibraltar gets its name: "Jabal Tariq" ("Mount of Tariq"). The Muslims overran Spain and then invaded France; they were defeated at Tours in 732.

Meanwhile, on another Muslim-Christian front, to the east, the Turks were on the attack. They crossed into Europe in the 14th century, holding Greece and the other Balkans for centuries.

But the Europeans had ambitions, too, both territorial and theological. In 1095, Peter the Hermit preached a Crusade—the word itself comes from the Latin for "cross"—for the liberation of Jerusalem. One can visit his statue outside Amiens Cathedral in France and see a determined-faced man waving a cross like a sword.

On the base of Peter's statue are the words, "Deus Lo Vult"—"God Wills It." As the 1914 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia records, "The Crusades were expeditions undertaken, in fulfillment of a solemn vow, to deliver the Holy Places from Mohammedan tyranny."

And there were many expeditions undertaken - eight in all, from 1096 to 1270. The Crusaders held Jerusalem for a century; the last Crusader fortress in the area fell in 1291.

So by the common reckoning, the Crusades covered a period of two centuries. And while the Crusaders were mostly animated by a blood-and-fire interpretation of Christianity, they were also interested in more mundane goals, such as land and treasure.

Indeed, over the past 14 centuries, all the Christian invasions of the Middle East have been undertaken with a mix of motives, high and low. We might think of subsequent onslaughts as simply latter-day Crusades. In 1798, Napoleon conquered Egypt; he was marching through modern-day Israel when he was summoned back to France. Maybe we could call that the Ninth Crusade. The British occupied Egypt in 1882; call that the Tenth Crusade. Then, after

By JAMES P. PINKERTON

Special to Newsday

Pinkerton is a Newsday columnist.



World War I, the British and French colonized most of the Middle East—the Eleventh Crusade.

Why this European neo-Crusading? They wanted riches and resources, of course, but they had other reasons, both idealism and what's-in-it-for-me-ism. Missionaries brought not only the gospel, but also education and medicine. Alas, the Arabs underfoot didn't appreciate these rationales, and so the Europeans were forced out, having failed in their objectives.

And now, in 2003, the Americans, the Twelfth Crusaders. The West is no longer "Christendom," but we, as first cousins to the Europeans, retain the old faith and bring new kinds of idealism, such as democracy and human rights. But the Crusader spirit is still there; it's still about bringing civilization and salvation of a backward people. As the born-again George W. Bush says, "This is about good vs. evil."

Of course, the Bush administration has made other arguments, too: that the war against Iraq was, in fact, defensive. And that's the way many regarded the earlier Crusades: as a pre-emptive war against evil. Here's the same Catholic Encyclopedia: "From the outset the Crusades were defensive wars and checked the advance of the Mohammedans who, for two centuries, concentrated their forces in a struggle against the Christian settlements in Syria."

Syria. That country was ancient when the upstart Muslims conquered Damascus in 636. It's seen more wars than almost any place, and yet many believe that peace in the Middle East depends on political decisions made by the Syrians—or imposed on the Syrians. So I need to make my own trek to Damascus, armed with nothing more than a little knowledge about its history, and a lot of curiosity about its future. Because I have the feeling that, back in America, the Thirteenth Crusade is being planned.

US caught between two governments glaring across a One-China Policy

By HARVEY FELDMAN

China's premier, Wen Jiabao, comes to Washington this week with a tough item atop his agenda: to tell the United States to rein in Taiwan's democracy and keep the island republic from replacing its constitution, which proclaims Taiwan as the legal government of all China—or risk war in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan is a multiparty democracy with a popularly elected president. Its people go to the polls in March to reelect their leader or select a new head of state. This is something the people of China don't get to do. But that's not what upsets Beijing. China's current saber rattling arises because the major political parties on Taiwan are discussing constitutional changes.

When Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after losing to Mao Tse-tung's communist armies—but still claiming to be China's rightful ruler—he brought along the constitution he had pushed through in Nanking in 1947. So the Legislature he set up on Taiwan had seats for all the mainland constituencies, filled by those elected in 1948. If an elected official died, the runner-up or the runner-up's runner-up took over. As late as 1990 you could still meet some oldster in Taiwan who introduced himself as the member from Shanghai or Chungking, because no new elections could be held until the mainland was recaptured.

That farce ended in the early 1990s after Chiang and his son and successor, Chiang Ching-kuo, died. Martial law was gone, the secret police was disbanded and political prisoners released. Slowly but surely, those who had retreated with the Chiangs lost influence over the Taiwanese, whose ancestors had settled the island before the American Revolution.

The reformed Legislature now represents only constituencies in Taiwan. Direct, popular election of the president began in 1996, something new in all the millenniums of ethnic Chinese political practice. But all of this comes about under a constitution that still proclaims the Republic of China—Taiwan—as the sole legal government of all of China.

You would think dropping that claim would please Beijing. But you would be wrong because a constitution written for a Taiwan that lays no claim to rule all of China, that admitted it does not control Canton or Shanghai, would be a constitution for ... Taiwan. A constitution for a Taiwan that might even say the island republic is an independent nation and not a part of the People's Republic of China.

Never mind that this happens to be fact or that the PRC has never controlled Taiwan. Wen and the PRC hold to an often-repeated formula: There is only one China in the world. Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. And China's only legal government is the people's government in Beijing. Beijing calls this "the sacred One China Principle."

So what's the U.S. role in all this? Because President Carter switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing to gain an ally against the Soviet Union, successive administrations have said the U.S. follows a "one-China policy."

But our "policy" is not at all like Beijing's "principle." Washington's "one-China policy" says we have diplomatic relations only with Beijing, though we maintain all other relations with Taipei, and we "acknowledge" China's claim to the island, but we make no statement about Taiwan's status. There is one stipulation: We insist that any change in that status must be accomplished peacefully, and with the consent of Taiwan's people. In fact, we have a law that says these things: the Taiwan Relations Act, passed by the House and Senate in 1979.

So now we have China's premier, in office only a few months and with the old guard peering over his shoulder, coming to demand that the U.S. warn the Taiwanese they're playing with fire if they proceed to dump the 1947 constitution. Otherwise, Wen will say, if war comes to the Taiwan Strait, it will be America's responsibility. That Washington last week pressured Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian to back away from a referendum on independence apparently wasn't good enough.

In reply, President Bush should quote to Wen the words of the Taiwan Relations Act: The United States will "consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States." He might replay his April 2000 statement about doing whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend itself if attacked.

But in any case, the president should add: "It really is time, even past time, for your government to sit down and talk directly to the government on Taiwan—without preconditions, without threats. And without expecting the United States to carry your water for you."

Harvey Feldman is a retired ambassador who was one of the authors of the Taiwan Relations Act. He is now senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation's Asia Studies Center.

Free pass for free trade

For the past several years Morocco has advanced as much as any Arab country toward political liberalization. It has released some human rights prisoners, held a couple of fairly open elections, created more rights for women inside and outside of government. But as in other would-be reformist states around the region, the underlying system hasn't changed. Power is still monopolized by a king, Mohammed VI; its Parliament is more a debating society than a legislative body. Islamic groups are banned or strictly controlled, prisoners are still abused and even secular, liberal-minded journalists are liable to be thrown in jail if they dare to criticize His Majesty.

Morocco, in short, is one of the countries where democratic progress seems most possible—but it's also one of those "moderate" Arab autocracies where for decades the United States has ignored domestic repression in exchange for help on foreign policy and security matters. Since Sept. 11, 2001, Morocco has been more helpful than most, even after suffering its own devastating bomb attack in Casablanca last May. Yet President Bush has announced, three times, the abandonment of that old Middle East real politik in favor of a policy of promoting freedom—which raises the interesting question of what that should mean for this North African country.

Here's what the administration has told King Mohammed it means: Economic aid is to be quadrupled next year, while military aid will be doubled. What's more, a free trade agreement between the United States and Morocco—only the second one with an Arab state—will be finished soon; negotiators were meeting over the weekend in the hope of wrapping it up. All this will be offered with no political strings attached: no requirement that the king take another step or two toward democracy, or even that he let Ali Mrabet, the last journalist who tweaked him, out of jail.

"We have strongly supported the steps Morocco has taken to move into the future," Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said in Marrakesh last week after meeting with Mohammed. "We want to be partners in this effort, and our support for Morocco as it fights terrorism and undertakes reform has increased dramatically."

The revealing part of this policy is not the favored treatment; it's the free ride. Morocco, after all, has always been an American favorite. But in other parts of the world, the United States has not hesitated to use economic leverage to promote political change. To this day, Russia's access to U.S. markets depends on its respect for certain human rights. Arab democracy advocates in the Middle East, such as Egypt's Saad Eddin Ibrahim, argue that U.S. aid and trade preferences ought to be explicitly linked to political road maps—not instant democracy, but steps toward greater freedom, tailored to bolster the indigenous civil society or reform movements of each country.

Morocco, they argue, would be a particularly good place to establish such links. The king, who is 40 years old and took power just four years ago, claims he favors multiparty democracy, a free press and respect

Bloomberg merits more support from blacks

When New York voters were polled recently on whether they approved of the way Mayor Michael Bloomberg is doing his job, only 37 percent of them said yes. Among black voters, he fared even worse—a measly 29 percent. This prompted a city official close to the mayor to lament that, while Bloomberg has taken on quite a few issues that black people care about, "he still gets his - kicked."

Talk to black politicians and community leaders who interact with Bloomberg on a regular basis and, according to a newspaper article that appeared last week, they give him high marks for being open and interested in the needs of the city's black residents. But talk to some regular black folks, and the mayor seems to be in trouble. They describe him as aloof and disconnected, someone who doesn't seek out their opinions before he acts—in short, a rich white guy whose most generous gestures come off as patronizing.

"I talk with a lot of people," says Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields, who says blacks feel there's a "disconnect" with the mayor. She pointed to his decision to close a Harlem firehouse and to alter the community's after-school programs as moves that upset Harlemites deeply. People care about these things, she said, "no matter that the mayor brings in Bill Gates to donate millions of dollars" for schools.

"He seems to be running the city like it's his company, with zero regard for people's ideas about what he should do," said Robb Davis, a freelance writer from Brooklyn, who is black. "You can't do that if you're mayor of a city as diverse as this one."

Consider Bloomberg's record. Crime continues to be at record-low levels, including in some black neighborhoods where it used to be the highest. The mayor has announced a program to create 65,000 new units of housing. He's initiated the most sweeping school reform in 30 years and taken drastic measures to balance the city's budget, while trying to maintain basic city services. Harlem, the city's signature black neighborhood, is booming. So what explains Bloomberg's problem with blacks?

First, he's white and Republican, and blacks tend to view the Republican Party as hostile to many of their concerns. Bloomberg is also rich, which suggests to some that he couldn't possibly relate to poorer people of color. His lifestyle—eschewing Gracie Mansion for the comparative luxury of his East Side town house and using his private jet for business and pleasure—makes him seem out of touch with the



By JACKSON DIEHL

for human rights. So to make aid and free trade contingent on progress toward those goals would only be to take him at his word.

To this, administration officials protest that U.S. free trade agreements don't contain such provisions, that they weren't included in the 2001 trade deal with Jordan, that to demand them from Morocco would merely undermine the deal. But Morocco signed just such a deal seven years ago, with the European Union. One article of its "association accord" commits it to progress toward democracy and respect for human rights, and it gives European governments the right to raise these issues—though the EU, being the EU, never has.

Robert B. Zoellick, the U.S. trade negotiator, makes another argument: Free trade invariably helps build the foundations of a free society through requirements for open rule-making, through the growth of a middle class. So why make the progress you hope for a juridical requirement? "Democracy and openness is our goal," he told me. "If democracy is seen as blocking access to trade, I worry that what you will plant is not the seeds of democracy but the seeds of resentment." Zoellick has big plans for the Middle East: He sees Morocco, Jordan and Bahrain—a Persian Gulf state next in line for a free trade deal—as anchors for free trade across the region. It's a great idea. But what's to stop existing Arab regimes from using the resulting economic boost to refresh their hold on political power?

Okay, some other administration officials then say, here's the real deal. The United States isn't popular in the Middle East these days. But King Mohammed has been a true friend. He's done everything we've asked in the war on terrorism; his intelligence service has been a gold mine. He's refused to break with us on Iraq. And so now we're going to reward him by telling him to give up his throne for democracy? We can't—and the free trade deal is the one positive we've got going for us in that country.

It's not a bad argument. Maybe that's the right conclusion for now. But it raises the question about that old Middle East policy, the one President Bush has renounced three times. When Morocco's friendly king seals his strings-free trade agreement, will the Arabs—will Ali Mrabet—get the message that America is committed to their freedom or to their rulers?



By SHERYL MCCARTHY
Newsday
McCarthy is a Newsday columnist.

average black New Yorker. Even his acts of generosity, such as offering to pay the funeral expenses for a man who recently died on a train, come off as patronizing to some black folks. Certainly paying millions to finance a ballot initiative makes people feel he thinks he can buy anything he wants.

I like Bloomberg. I especially like the fact that he's not your typical politician, who stages every word and deed for the political mileage he can get out of it. I like the fact that he's low key and not aggressive, and that he approaches problems coolly and deliberately. I like the fact that he says what he thinks, rather than playing to the emotions of the time and the crowd. New Yorkers—and black New Yorkers are no exception—like mayors who are dramatic in venting the feelings of the people. They prefer a mayor who responds to crises by announcing an immediate investigation, proposing a new law, railing at the perpetrators or blasting the federal and state officials who didn't keep their promises.

Bloomberg isn't dramatic. But his efforts to date belie the charge that he's detached, doesn't interact with blacks, and that he's above it all. He doesn't hold town meetings, but this is a mayor who rides the subway to the outer boroughs, meets with community groups, attends local functions, and takes his senior aides along to listen and respond. Shutting a firehouse and altering an after-school program is hard on a community, but a mayor has to make lots of hard choices. And, while Bloomberg was criticized for laying off hundreds of school aides, many of them black, it certainly beat laying off teachers.

Mike Bloomberg is no Bill Clinton, but fortunately he's no Rudy Giuliani, either. He could probably stand to work on his personal style. But, even if black New Yorkers don't want to have him to dinner, they would be wrong to write him off.

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Court convicts two men who escaped prison

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The Superior Court convicted on escape charges two of the three Chinese who had bolted from CNMI Immigration's detention facility.

Authorities, however, have yet to capture the third man, 46-year-old Cui Shun Zhe, as of yesterday, almost six months after the escape.

Associate Judge Ramona Manglona

yesterday convicted 19-year-old Min Zhang, who pleaded guilty to the charge of escape. Manglona approved the plea agreement Zhang had with the Attorney General's Office.

Justin Wolosz, the CNMI's immigration enforcement attorney, said Zhang would be deported from the CNMI soon. He said the government recently deported Chengao Jin, 44, after the latter owned up to the escape charge.

In exchange for the defendants'

guilty plea, the AGO agreed to have the criminal mischief charges against them dismissed.

The three men escaped from detention on July 27 last year by removing a grate and climbing through a window. At that time, the court had a standing deportation order against them and had remanded them to the Immigration detention facility.

Lawmen first captured Jin on Aug. 18. On Nov. 2, authorities nabbed Zhang.

OES to hold PTSA meeting

The acting principal of Oleai Elementary School would like to inform the parents and guardians of Oleai Elementary School students that the PTSA meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 20, around 6pm at the school cafeteria. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

FOUR

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The juveniles were taken to the Department of Public Safety for processing and were later turned over to the Division of Youth Services.

All suspects were charged with underaged alcohol consumption, disturbing the peace, and curfew violation.

Blas said random inspections would be stepped up in the coming days due to the continued increase of criminal activities involving juveniles in several areas on Saipan.

DPS had also warned that, besides apprehending juveniles who are found violating curfew hours, their parents and guardians would also be meted out appropriate charges, including child neglect.

This came about after authorities disclosed that despite the warnings,

parents continue to allow their children to stay out and loiter outside establishments even during curfew hours.

Blas said areas that would remain under police surveillance are Garapan, Koblerville, Chalan Kanoa, Susupe, and other villages where criminal activities commonly happen.

The DPS said that minors aged 15 years old and under should not be out on the streets between 9pm to 5am Mondays through Thursdays, and from 10pm to 5am Fridays through Sundays.

For minors 16 years old and above, curfew hours are from 10pm to 5am Mondays through Thursdays, and from 11pm to 5am Fridays through Sundays. During these times, minors should not be seen outside their homes and loitering around establishments and streets.

GAS

From Page 1

media announcement. But he said the increase, which had yet to be effective when he was loading gas early last night, "doesn't matter."

Before the increase, Shell gas stations pegged retail prices of regular and

premium gasoline at \$2.109 and \$2.209 per gallon, respectively. Shell Gualo Rai's cashier, Cerlyn Cabrera, said the flow of customers remained normal.

"As we have stated before, when market conditions improve and refinery prices ease, we will lower prices at the pump for our customers," Stalker said.

CDC

From Page 1

training. It's knowing one's responsibility. It's about developing a public health plan to ensure that when we're faced with emergencies, we'd know what to do. We won't wait until that time to begin discussing strategies," Keim said.

He said the CDC pays attention to the Pacific, which covers the CNMI given a fact that the region is known to be disaster-prone.

"This is one disaster-prone area in the world...so we're coming ahead of time, going to the people to educate and equip them so people from other nations can learn from us," he said, noting that while most of the states in the U.S. had not began preparedness programs, Pacific has gone ahead.

In fact, he said, that shortly before the Sept. 11, 2001 tragedy in the U.S., Pacific islands had already finished a series of preparedness strategies.

Yesterday's workshop focused on vector-control program, which involves response strategies in addressing possible infestation of pest—flies, mosquitoes, and rats—after a disaster.

"These are public health issues that need to be adequately addressed," he said.

CDC operations research scientist Paul J. Giannone said this week's workshop also focuses on water and sanitation and related injuries.

He said that on the next round of workshop, the CDC team would focus on technological disasters such as oil spill, bioterrorism, and plane crash.

On the third series of meetings, the CDC would dwell on disease outbreaks such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

The team will be coming back and forth the CNMI until June to do emergency preparedness plans.

This, as the DPH earlier said that it fully complies with the bioterrorism preparedness and prevention measures following a site inspection by a CDC team recently.

The department recently received some \$1.3 million from CDC and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to prevent infectious diseases, bioterror attacks, and other public health emergencies.

The department said some \$654,000 came from CDC to upgrade infectious disease surveillance and investigation in the CNMI and over \$612,000 came from the DHHS to improve CHC's patient capacity, isolation capacity, and staffing system.



LIBERTY DONES

Workers fence a portion of the Third Street in Western Garapan, as construction of the Promenade kicked off yesterday. The multi-million pedestrian mall project in the area is expected to earn for the CNMI some \$200 million in the first four years of the tourist zone's revitalization program.

GARAPAN

From Page 1

or ground digging activities will begin today.

Butch Tomboc, Maeda branch manager, said the work in the first phase may take 45 days. "We do this by phase so the other area remains open. Once this area is done, we'll move to the next."

Government officials hope that the pedestrian project, called The Promenade, would transform the image of Garapan from being an unattractive site to a pleasant tourism destination.

The project was awarded to Maeda Pacific Corp., which promises

to complete the work by June this year, even as the company has nine months to finish the whole project.

Maeda general manager Tom Nielsen said drainage work in the area would take three months and the concrete walkway work takes another three months.

Initial plan showed that construction work in the area takes place from 4am to noon everyday for six days a week.

"We don't want to be here during the peak hours when people are shopping," he has said.

The mall construction, the third phase of the approximately \$25-million Garapan revitalization project, includes the setting up of a lighting system, drinking fountains, covered

shelters, and public toilets.

The Revitalization Project aims to transform the downtown Garapan into an attractive and safe focal point for tourist and resident activities, including strolling, outdoor dining, outdoor musical entertainment and festivities.

The government said this project would generate at least \$200 million revenue for the government within the four-year period of the revitalization.

The mall project has resulted in some businesses located in the area to close down or relocate.

Some shopkeepers have complained about the lack of compensation by the government for business disruption due to the project.

DPS steps up child passenger safety campaign

By **EDITH G. ALEJANDRO**
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety will step up its child passenger safety awareness campaign to educate the community on the risks of improper use of child restrains, as well as on existing laws relating to these violations.

DPS-Traffic Operations Supervisor Sgt. Joseph A. Flores said this is in line with the annual observance of the CNMI Child Passenger Safety Month.

Flores said the observance of the 2003 CNMI Child Passenger Safety Month would focus on the laws about children’s protection onboard a vehicle and its importance to the lives of the child-passengers.

“It is the intention of the DPS-Traffic Section to raise awareness in the community on child-passenger safety and to ensure its success,” he said, adding that the awareness campaign also hopes to decrease injuries and deaths of children and other vehicle occupants in vehicular accidents.

He urged the community to participate in a meeting that would be held on January 20 around 1:30pm at the DPS Training and Academy Building to learn more about

the child passenger safety campaign activities.

According to statistics, more children are killed and crippled in car crashes than from any other injuries. Motor vehicles are the leading cause of death for children aged 6 to 14, as well as for older teens and young adults throughout the nation.

Everyday in the U.S., an average of seven children, aged 0-14, are killed and another 872 are injured in motor vehicle crashes.

When applied correctly, child safety measures reduce the risk of death by 54 percent for children aged one to four, and 71 percent for kids under one year

old. If all children under the age of five used child safety seats properly, some 200 deaths and 20,000 injuries could be prevented annually.

The CNMI, along with 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and other insular areas, has enacted laws requiring the use of the child passenger

protection systems. Many child safety seats are misused in some way. Correct placement and harnessing is critical to ensure adequate protection.

Death and injury may be significantly reduced through greater public awareness, information, education, and enforcement of child safety laws.

In U.S. mainland, an average of six children aged infant to 14 are killed—and 797 are injured—in motor vehicle crashes everyday.

In 2001, child protection system usage was at 52 percent in the CNMI. The number went up to 72 in 2002 due to public awareness campaigns and strict enforcement made by the DPS.

Armed men rob poker attendant

By **EDITH G. ALEJANDRO**
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety is looking into an armed robbery incident that occurred in Gualo Rai Sunday night when three armed men held a poker attendant at gunpoint.

DPS spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said around 6:45pm Sunday, the cashier of 777 Treasure Island Poker in Gualo Rai—near The Field’s Bar—reported the incident to authorities.

According to the cashier, Jonalyn Hilomen, 20, three masked men entered the establishment and announced the hold up. Two of the suspects held her at gunpoint while the other one entered the cashier’s booth and sprayed mace on her face.

Investigators also reported that the video surveillance camera in the booth was taken out and the suspects also removed the money from the cashier’s booth.

The suspects stole over \$7,000 in cash and left the establishment. Blas said no arrest has been made yet and that investigation is ongoing.

The DPS urged individuals who may have information on the recent armed robbery incident to report it to the Thief Apprehension Select Coalition at 664-9042.

Individuals may also report the incident to the NMI Crime Stoppers’ tips line at 234-7272. All calls remain anonymous and rewards are given for information leading to an arrest.

microl used cars
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Northwest to fly Portland-Tokyo nonstop

Northwest Airlines today announced that it will offer daily nonstop service between Portland, Oregon and Tokyo beginning June 10, 2004.

The new service will make Portland the airline's eighth U.S.—Japan gateway and fourth West coast destination from Tokyo, more than what's by any other airline on both counts, as well as the first new Tokyo gateway that the airline has launched in almost five years.

"Northwest is excited by the opportunity to bring our 56 years of trans-Pacific experience, unrivaled Asia/Pacific network, and customer comforts and services to the Portland-Tokyo market," said Richard Anderson, chief executive officer of Northwest Airlines. "Travelers to and from Oregon will now have the convenience of nonstop flights from our Satellite 2 facilities at Narita Airport near Tokyo, and singles connections between Portland and 12 cities in our Asia/Pacific network."

From Northwest's Tokyo hub, Portland travelers will be able to make single connections to the airline's Asia/Pacific network which includes Bangkok, Thailand; Beijing; Busan, South Korea; Guam; Hong Kong; Manila, Philippines; Nagoya, Japan; Saipan, Mariana Islands; Seoul, South

Korea; Shanghai, People's Republic of China; Singapore and Taipei, Taiwan.

"Leaders in business, government and at the Port and Portland made it clear to Northwest that the community would value and support nonstop service to Tokyo," said Phil Haan, executive vice president of international, sales and information services. "We view today's announcement as the beginning of what we hope will be a mutually beneficial partnership to make Portland-Tokyo service a success for business and leisure travelers, the community and Northwest."

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a member of the Senate Aviation Subcommittee and the full Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, said, "The Tokyo service will create new opportunities for increased links between Oregon and Asia, with the potential to benefit businesses in both Japan and Oregon." He added, "I commend and thank Northwest Airlines for its decision to recognize the resurgence of Portland as an international destination."

Northwest's new flights are timed to allow convenient connections in Portland to and from nearly 30 U.S. destinations served by Northwest and its marketing

partner airlines, including Alaska Airlines, Horizon Air, Continental Airlines and Delta Air Lines.

"Oregon will benefit tremendously from this new service," said U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Oregon). "From tourism to high tech, our economy is closely intertwined with the availability of direct contact with Asia, and this will help bring desperately needed jobs to Oregon."

Flight 5 will depart Portland International Airport at 1:50 p.m. PST and arrive at Tokyo's Narita Airport the following day at 4:30 p.m. Flight 6 will depart Tokyo at 3:10 p.m. and return to Portland at 8:15am PST the same day.

Initially, the flight will be operated with a DC 10-30 aircraft, with 26 seats in Northwest's World Business Class and 247 seats in coach class.

In the fourth quarter of 2004, the flights are planned to transition to Northwest's new long-range Airbus A330-200 aircrafts, with 32 seats in World Business Class and 211 seats in coach class. Northwest will begin taking delivery of the first of 10 new A330-200s it has ordered in mid-2004.

The A330-200 will be equipped with Northwest's new lie-flat World Business Class seat that allows passengers to recline to 176 degrees,

offering more degrees of recline than what is available on any other U.S. airline and many international carriers. Northwest's new World Business Class seat offers passengers a virtually infinite number of adjustments so that the seat is able to conform to the position that is most comfortable for the individual passenger.

The A330-220 will also be equipped with Northwest's new, fully interactive in-flight entertainment system, offering both World Business Class and coach customers a wide variety of music, movies, short subject programs, games, shopping, and in-flight information, all "on demand." The new system permits customers the freedom and flexibility to start, pause, or stop any of these options at any time. World Business Class seats on Northwest's A330 have a 10.4 inch video screen, which is 50 percent larger than the screens found in business class seats on other U.S. airlines and many international airlines. Coach seats have an individual 6.5-inch screen.

In celebration of Northwest's new Portland-Tokyo nonstop service, the airlines is offering a special introductory fare of \$319 each way from Portland to Tokyo or Nagoya, Japan. Northwest is also offering introductory fares from Portland to Beijing, Busan, Hong Kong,

Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore or Taipei for \$379 each way, Bangkok for \$404 each way and Manila for \$494 each way.

Introductory fares are also being offered from other Pacific Northwest cities such as Bend/Redmond, Eugene and Klamath Falls, Ore., as well as Spokane, Wash., at slightly higher fares.

Example fares are each way, per passenger, based on a roundtrip purchase in coach class. Fares shown do not include a federal excise tax of \$3.10 per segment flown that will be imposed on each flight segment. A segment is defined as a takeoff and a landing. Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) of up to \$18 roundtrip, departure/arrival and customs and immigrations fees of up to \$80 USD apply. September 11 security fees of up to \$10 roundtrip per person may apply and additional terms and conditions apply. For a complete list of terms and conditions, see below.

Customers currently holding tickets for travel June 10, 2004 and beyond on connecting itineraries from Portland or other Pacific Northwest cities to Japan and Asia will be able to change to Northwest's new Portland-Tokyo nonstop service without paying an administrative change fee, provided changes are made by April 30, 2004.



ENJOYING WHILE WAITING

Lower grade students at Garapan Elementary School enjoy the swing at the school playground Monday afternoon while waiting for their rides. The Public School System resumed classes on Jan. 12, 2004.

LIBERTY DONES

Fiji ranked 76 in 'economic freedom'

The latest "economic freedom" rankings released by the Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal are positive for Fiji, says Information Minister Simone Kaitani.

Despite Fiji's 76th ranking and strong statements from the opposition questioning the country's economic viability, Kaitani says Fiji continues to maintain good economic status in the region compared to other smaller Pacific Island nations.

Kaitani said Fiji's economy is a star-

performer in the Asia/Pacific region. Despite the 2000 political turmoil, it still enjoys a slow and steady economic recovery and a positive economic growth, he said.

Kaitani said Fiji's status under the international community has been viewed as one that enjoys free economic activity by its people without government interference.

"We are talking here about the state of Economic freedom of a country, meaning how liberal we are in all

aspects, or being very open in areas such as foreign trade," he said.

Fiji is ranked at 76th out of 155 in the Economic Freedom of the World Annual Report 2003 by the Fraser Institute and Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman.

"These countries have much larger economies than Fiji, yet we as a small country are showing that we are very determined to ensure that the private sector becomes the engine of growth and that Government continues to support that growth." (*Fijilive/PIR*)

OVR rep to conduct outreach on Tinian

A representative from the CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will visit the Tinian community on January 14-15, 2004.

Individuals with disabilities interested in applying for vocational rehabilitation or independent living services are encouraged in applying to meet with Bernice Ravell, VR Counselor II, at the Tinian Health Center from 8am to 4pm for an overview of OVR's programs and services.

Ravell will also conduct follow-up

with current OVR consumers on their rehabilitation plan.

If you know anyone who has a disability, wants to work, and is interested in receiving VR services, or an individual with a disability who is interested in receiving IL services so that he/she may improve his/her ability to function independently in the home or community, contact Laurinda C. Santos at the Tinian Health Center at 433-9233. You can also contact OVR directly at its Saipan office toll-free at 433-2010.

Kiwi travelers warned about PNG dangers

The New Zealand government is warning its citizens in Papua New Guinea to take extra care because of a "deteriorating law and order situation".

And it warned there was "some possibility" of terrorism. The warning was released in a travel advisory by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

"In the Highlands provinces and the cities of Port Moresby and Lae, the law and order situation remains very poor," Mfat said.

New Zealanders in PNG were warned to exercise a high level of personal security and vigilance at all times, especially in public places frequented by foreigners, it said, highlighting armed robbery, vehicle hijackings, sexual assault including gang-rape as the major crimes common in Port Moresby and other urban centers.

"Visitors should take security precautions, and not walk alone, especially at night. Isolated public areas such as golf courses, beaches and parks can be dangerous. The settlement areas of towns and cities, particularly in Port Moresby, should be avoided," the

advisory said, adding that visitors should avoid taxis and buses and rely instead on their sponsor or hotel to arrange transport for them. It also called for anyone involved in accidents to go immediately to the nearest police station, rather than stop at the scene.

"Crowds tended to form quickly after an accident and might attack those they thought responsible," it said.

"Friends and relatives of an injured party may demand immediate compensation regardless of legal responsibility," the advisory said.

Mfat also said those traveling outside the country's major cities, particularly to more isolated areas, should seek advice from its High Commission in Papua New Guinea.

"Sporadic outbreaks of tribal fighting are a normal occurrence in the Highlands provinces. Travel in areas where there is tribal fighting should be avoided.

"It should be noted that travel to the old Panguna mine (on Bougainville) should be avoided in any circumstance due to the enforcement of a 'no-go zone' by armed elements of the Meka'mui Defence Force." (*PNG Post-Courier/PIR*)

Business

Airlines expected to report \$1B loss

Airline analysts say one of their top concerns at the start of 2004 is that the industry might slow its own recovery by adding capacity too quickly.

Major carriers begin reporting fourth quarter earnings this week and are expected to post more than \$1 billion in losses, a significant improvement from the same period a year ago, when the industry had roughly \$3 billion in red ink.

Blaylock & Partners airline analyst Ray Neidl said Monday that the industry did a “commendable” job of reducing non-labor expenses in 2003, primarily by utilizing aircraft more efficiently, but he worries carriers may have become too optimistic about their near-term turnaround prospects.

What he and other analysts fear is that the number of available seats will grow too fast in 2004, negating the potential benefits of the anticipated increase in passenger demand by putting downward pressure on ticket prices and profit margins, or “yields.”

Neidl predicted that

industrywide capacity would grow 8-9 percent in 2004, while Lehman Brothers airline analyst Gary Chase put the figure at 7-8 percent. Forecasts for increased passenger demand are in roughly the same range.

Chase said in a report published Monday that “carriers have experienced yield weakness which we believe is due in part to capacity creep,” or growth.

Chase said he expects a “very challenging 2004 in the absence of a meaningful improvement in demand.”

The factors underlying the anticipated \$1.1 billion net loss in the fourth quarter, according to Neidl, are weaker-than-expected holiday travel, higher fuel costs and bargain-hunting by business travelers.

Neidl said he does not expect any of the hub-and-spoke carriers like American and Delta to report a profit. In contrast, he anticipates low-cost carriers such as Southwest Airlines, AirTran Airways and JetBlue Airways, as well as some regional carriers, to be profitable, bringing total industry losses below \$1 billion. **(AP)**

Getting people to buy on the fly

By MARGARET WEBB PRESSLER
THE WASHINGTON POST

Airport retailing can be extremely profitable if it's done well, even though the costs are higher. But doing it well requires a whole different mindset for the retailer.

“A lot of the operators that are in airports are strictly in airports, because it's a whole difference science,” said Pauline Armbrust, publisher of Airport Revenue News, an industry trade publication.

Even getting one's shop into an airport is a far more complex and time-consuming process than taking space in traditional retail settings. Potential tenants must submit formal bids for space in response to a request by the airport. Typically, an evaluation committee whittles the bids down, then the applicants have to do oral presentations, and the final winner has to be approved by a board of governors, which may include local business owners and airport executives. “It gets really political,” Armbrust said.

The store's design must be suitable—typically quite small, while allowing ample room for customers with baggage to

maneuver—and is also subject to strict airport guidelines. Even the construction itself is likely to be vastly different and more expensive than a typical store project, with every worker checked and badged, every screwdriver inspected and, in some cities, every truck sniffed by bomb-detecting dogs.

“Selection of location within the terminal is critical. Design is critical. Signs and graphics are critical,” said Paul McGinn, president of MarketPlace Development, a Boston-based airport retail developer. “Those things are always important in retail, but they're even more so in this venue, because (airport retailers) are in competition with the primary function that anyone in an airport has: to travel and to get through security.”

Indeed, shopper motivation is perhaps the single most distinctive factor in an airport mall setting. In a typical shopping center, people mill around because they want to be there and spend money. At an airport, people have to be persuaded to even think about buying something. Window displays must be especially eye-catching and merchandise must

be appropriate for frazzled, time-strapped shopper-travelers.

Food purveyors and newsstands are naturally the biggest money-makers. Food and beverages account for more than half of the \$6.20 spent, on average, in the top 50 airports by each boarding passenger, according to Airport Revenue News. The rest is split about equally by news and gift stores and specialty retailers.

Because specialty stores aren't generally selling products that fill obvious travel needs (those can come down to a magazine and a muffin), merchandise in these stores is usually geared heavily toward the impulse buy.

Travel accessories of all kinds are easiest to sell, as are products tailored to the destination, such as sunglasses and hats in Florida. Still, a wide variety of merchandise can be found, including jewelry, lingerie, ties—and even a mini-manicure or -massage.

But the merchandise is almost meaningless if a shopper can't get in and out quickly, so most airport shops have more staff than a regular retail operation. There might be two registers even in a small store,

and a restaurant might have a smaller kitchen, a shorter menu and hotter ovens.

Developers that manage airport retail projects do a lot of training and hand-holding to get their tenants up to speed on the finer points of airport selling, said Kelly Price, vice president of airport retail management for the international shopping center developer Westfield Corp., which manages retail operations at Reagan National and Dulles International airports, among others. The company offers employee training, secret checks of customer service and careful price comparisons with non-airport retailers. (Airport prices, it turns out, are comparable to those at the mall.)

The big rush to improve airport retail around the country is as much about public relations as it is about profits. The concession businesses at different airports are not all managed the same way. Some are overseen by cities, some by quasi-governmental organizations, and some by individual airlines. For those with government ties, the whole development is geared to promoting the city and its local flavor. It's a billboard for the city.

dial freezer

Disney closes Orlando animation studio

By GARY GENTILE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

The Walt Disney Co. is shuttering its Orlando, Fla.-based animation studio, cutting about 258 jobs, as the company shifts from hand-drawn animated films to computer-generated features and videos.

Some of the employees will be offered jobs in Burbank, Calif., Disney said Monday in announcing the move.

The company has been steadily trimming its animation department for the past few years, from a peak of 2,200 employees in 1999 to 600, all based in Burbank after Monday's announcement. Disney has shuttered similar animation outposts in Paris and Tokyo, which were opened at the height of the boom in hand-drawn animation.

Over the past few years, as computer-generated 3-D films proved far more successful at the box office than traditional 2-D films, Disney shifted from having a large number of animators on staff to hiring on a per-film basis.

The move resulted in layoffs and major salary cuts and an emphasis on producing less costly 2-D films. The 2002 success "Lilo & Stitch," for instance, was produced for about \$80 million compared with \$140 million for the box-office flop "Treasure Planet," released the same year.

Disney has also been releasing a larger number of animated movies and sequels direct to video, a move that boots profits by vastly reducing the cost of production.

The Orlando studio, opened in 1989, has animated some of Disney's more popular films, including "Lilo & Stitch," "Mulan," and this year's "Brother Bear."

But Disney has had its most success with animated films it produces in cooperation with Pixar Animation Studio, which uses computers. Hits produced that way include "Finding Nemo," "Toy Story" and "Monsters Inc."

The closing of its Orlando unit may, in fact, signal that Disney is close to announcing an extension of its deal with Pixar, according to one analyst.

That deal is set to expire in 2006 with the release of "Cars," the fifth film in the agreement that has Disney and Pixar split profits from the movies. Pixar has been pushing for a new pact where it owns its movies and pays Disney a set fee to distribute them.

If Disney believed its Pixar relationship was about to significantly change or even fall apart, it would be beefing up its internal animation capacity instead of cutting it, according to David Miller, a financial analyst with Sander Morris Harris.

"It infers that Disney will be producing a lower number of animated films in the coming years," Miller said Monday. "Where is the film production going to come from? Most likely from Pixar, should they extend their co-production agreement."

Disney has only two animated films in production, both of which are computer-generated - "Chicken Little," due in 2005, and "A Day With Wilbur Robinson," set for release in 2006.



Saul Mendoza of Wimberley, Texas is flanked by Mickey and Minnie Mouse after winning the wheelchair division of the Disney Marathon for the eighth time Sunday, Jan. 11, 2004, in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Mendoza completed the 26.2-mile course in 1:48:15.

Retailers: More shoppers and more pay are needed

By LAUREN WEBER
NEWSDAY

Shoppers have kept the U.S. economy afloat through the doldrums of the past few years and should deliver another boost in 2004—but that momentum will continue only if businesses start hiring workers at a faster pace, a retail trade group said Monday.

The National Retail Federation told its members attending its convention in New York that retail sales will rise by 5 percent this year, a modest increase from the 4.3 percent growth last year. But that's possible only if consumers have more to spend.

"The most important factor in the sales forecast is increases in wages and salaries," said Rosalind Wells, the federation's chief economist.

That is a wild card, especially following Friday's dismal jobs report, which noted that only 1,000 new jobs were generated last month, far below

economists' expectation of 150,000 jobs.

"We're counting on the employment numbers picking up," Wells said. "Without that, we won't get as good growth as we think."

Retailers also are counting on larger tax rebates for some households, as a result of the Bush administration's tax cuts, to fuel a strong first half of the year.

Wells had high hopes for the New York outlook. The stock market's recent climb is injecting money into the local economy, thanks in part to year-end bonuses received by Wall Street employees. Those bonuses may have helped drive the strong showing by luxury retailers during the holiday season. Affluent shoppers flocked to stores such as Tiffany & Co., Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman-Marcus.

Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., speaking at the conference, put that trend into broader context. "Luxury retailers were doing well, but the vast majority of people in this country don't fit

into that category," she said. "We've got to figure out how to get economic activity and confidence going again for the majority in this country. There are only so many luxury products that can be sold," she said, adding that workers still feel anxious about job security.

Lee Scott, chief executive of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., called on the government, rather than business, to provide some of that safety net for American workers, particularly in the form of health-care reform.

"We think the health-care issue has reached crisis proportions," said Scott, whose company is often criticized for its low wages and lack of benefits. "It's time for the government to step in and try to figure out how to get a handle on these costs."

"It's so easy to say the reason jobs are leaving the United States is labor costs," he added at his keynote speech Sunday. "But there are other structural issues here that need to be addressed."

Dow, Nasdaq bullish on 4Q reporting

By MEG RICHARDS
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Wall Street edged higher in choppy trading Monday, with investors making few moves as they waited for companies to start reporting their fourth-quarter earnings this week.

With only a handful of firms issuing profit warnings and some others forecasting year-over-year earnings growth as high as 20 percent, analysts expressed confidence that the market would continue its advance.

"There's reason to be more optimistic than most people were after seeing that crummy jobs figure on Friday," said Philip S. Dow, managing director of equity strategy at Dain Rauscher Wessels in Minneapolis. "Whenever business begins to come back, that's not a recovery you measure in months, you measure it in years."

The Dow Jones industrial average closed up 26.29, or 0.2 percent, at 10,485.18, after gaining 0.5 percent last week.

The broader gauges were also higher. The Nasdaq composite index closed up

24.86, or 1.2 percent, at 2,111.78, after rising 4 percent last week. This was a new 2 1/2-year closing high for the Nasdaq, which last closed higher on July 3, 2001, when it stood at 2,140.80.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index gained 5.37, or 0.5 percent, to 1,127.23, following a weekly gain of 1.2 percent.

The market was still digesting Friday's employment data from the Labor Department, which said unemployment dropped to a 14-month low of 5.7 percent while payrolls increased by just 1,000 jobs, a sign that many have given up the search for work.

For the most part, though, investors were focused on the strong earnings outlook. But analysts also warned that some of the expected profit gains may already be reflected in stock prices, as companies have anticipated for some time that they would benefit from easy year-over-year comparisons. It may be more difficult for them to best last year's returns in future quarters, said Neil Massa, equity trader at John Hancock Funds.

World

pm&o

Asia

China denies new possible SARS patient

By STEPHANIE HOO
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BEIJING (AP)—China said Tuesday that a businessman reported by Hong Kong media as a possible SARS patient doesn't have the disease, and the World Health Organization cautioned against overloading the nation's health-care system by treating everyone with cold or flu symptoms as a SARS case.

The businessman who was hospitalized in the southern city of Shenzhen with a fever and cough has been found to have bacterial pneumonia, the official Xinhua News Agency and newspapers said. They cited the head of the city's health bureau, Zhou Jun'an.

Chinese authorities have one confirmed SARS case this season and say they have two suspected cases, all in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, which also includes Shenzhen. Shenzhen borders Hong Kong, which is screening people who cross the border in hopes of keeping out the flu-like disease.

The confirmed SARS patient was released from a hospital last week after being pronounced recovered, while the two suspected patients are still being treated.

Severe acute respiratory syndrome emerged in Guangdong in late 2002 and sickened more than 8,000 people worldwide before subsiding in June. The disease killed 774 people.

Authorities have launched an emergency effort to prevent a new outbreak, ordering the slaughter of thousands of animals seized from markets and launching a campaign to exterminate rats in an attempt to eliminate possible sources of disease.

A WHO spokesman said China must take care to screen out cases of cold and flu before committing the huge resources needed to isolate and treat a SARS patient.

"No one wants to overdiagnose, which is just as dangerous as under-diagnosing in terms of overloading the



A Chinese woman gets an infrared check for her body temperature at a train station in Guangzhou, China, Friday, Jan. 9, 2004.

Singapore's health minister says
'something good' came from SARS

SINGAPORE (AP)—Singapore's health minister said Tuesday "something good" came out of the 2003 SARS outbreak because it strengthened the World Health Organization's hand and increased global cooperation in battling epidemics.

But Khaw Boon Wan criticized China's initial response to the flu-like illness, blaming a cover-up by local officials for "the unnecessary escalation of the crisis."

The virus was spread worldwide by a Guangdong doctor who traveled to Hong Kong in February 2003. He then passed it on to carriers who took the virus to Canada, Vietnam and Singapore.

Regional health officials in China initially played down the extent of the illness until the central government stepped in.

But Khaw said there were positives from the outbreak. "Something good has come out of this misfortune

globally," Khaw told a conference on Singapore's outlook for 2004.

"It strengthened the hand of the WHO in forging a global response...Many cross-border relationships were forged, even existing ones were further strengthened," Khaw added.

Severe acute respiratory syndrome has since resurfaced, with China confirming one case and two suspected cases.

"The world has now learnt that the instinctive approach to sweep bad medical news under the carpet so as to protect the economy was the wrong approach," Khaw said.

He urged countries to pour more money into improving public health, especially in Southeast Asia.

"Hopefully, the SARS crisis would now lead to serious action, especially in our region. Much needs to be done," he said.

Singapore recorded 33 deaths from 239 infected during the SARS outbreak. It killed 774 people globally died from over 8,000 sickened.

health care system," said spokesman Bob Dietz in Beijing.

"You can't just willy nilly isolate everybody who walks into a hospital because they have a fever," Dietz said. "First you have to exclude ... the

possibility of other diseases before treating them as SARS cases."

Also Tuesday, a spokeswoman for the Shenzhen Health Bureau also denied what she said were rumors of other possible SARS cases in the city.

China's strictness in defining SARS cases led to confusion earlier when officials first denied that a waitress in Guangzhou had tested positive for the disease and later announced that she was the country's second suspected case.

US team
digesting
N. Korea
nuclear info

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—U.S. Congressional aides who visited North Korea's secretive nuclear plant said they have a lot of information to digest before they can say how far the communist country has come in its nuclear weapons development, a senior South Korean official said Monday.

Republican aide Keith Luse and Democratic colleague Frank Jannuzi, both staffers for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, met with South Korean officials to discuss last week's trip to the Yongbyon nuclear complex.

"They said they cannot say that anything was proven or verified during their trip," said Wi Sung-lac, head of the South Korean Foreign Ministry's North American Affairs Bureau.

"They said many things were unclear and they needed more discussions and analysis before coming to their own assessment."

The visit—by five U.S. delegates including Luse and Jannuzi—was the first by outsiders since the North expelled U.N. inspectors in late 2002. The North said it showed the team its "nuclear deterrent"—though what exactly they saw still has not been made public.

The delegates, including former Los Alamos Laboratory director Sig Hecker, held discussions with North Korean nuclear scientists, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan and Lt. Gen. Ri Chan Bok, the North Korean military's point man at talks with the American-led United Nations Command in Seoul, Wi said.

US death toll in Afghanistan now 100

By STEPHEN GRAHAM
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An American soldier returning from a patrol became the 100th fatality in the U.S. military’s two-year Afghan campaign when his vehicle collided with a truck, highlighting the dangers facing U.S. forces in a nation roiled by a stubborn Taliban insurgency.

The toll pales in comparison to the tally of American dead in Iraq, which is approaching 500.

But it is still a striking number in a force that is a small fraction of the size of the 130,000-strong U.S. contingent in Iraq.

The U.S. military did not identify the soldier in a brief statement issued Monday. It said he was involved in an accident southwest of the Afghan capital Friday night and died of his injuries the next morning.

“His death underscores the dangers inherent in Operation Enduring Freedom, and our condolences go out to his family,” the statement said,

without giving further details.

As in Iraq, where the U.S. military also triumphed, the number of U.S. casualties in Afghanistan has continued to rise, undermining claims by American leaders that the military campaign has brought stability to Afghans left destitute by a quarter-century of war.

Only 16 Americans died in the lightning war that drove the Taliban from power at the end of 2001 for providing a refuge and base for Osama bin Laden, the suspected mastermind of the Sept.

11, 2001 attacks in the United States. The rest of the Americans died after the Taliban’s defeat.

Likewise in Iraq, most of the deaths—both combat and non-combat—have occurred since President Bush declared an end to major fighting on May 1. A roadside bomb explosion Monday killed the 495th American service member since the Iraq war began in March.

Pentagon spokesman James Turner confirmed that the weekend death brought the total from Operation Enduring

Freedom in Afghanistan to 100—30 from hostile fire and 70 “non-hostile” casualties.

When measured against the large disparity in forces, the tally belies conventional wisdom that Afghanistan has become a far safer place to operate. The U.S. provides 9,000 of the 11,000-member coalition troops stationed in Afghanistan.

The Afghan government said Monday it “honored” America’s sacrifice to free the country from al-Qaida and the Taliban and appealed for continued international support.

RP to resume peace talks with rebels

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Formal peace talks between the government and communist rebels are set to resume next month at an unspecified foreign venue, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said Tuesday.

She said details are being finalized by both sides along with Norway, which has brokered a peace process to end the 35-year-old insurgency by the Communist Party of the Philippines, its military arm the New People’s Army and its political umbrella group the National Democratic Front.

The Philippine government suspended the last round of peace talks, in Oslo in 2001, after communist guerrillas killed a former congressman they had accused of human rights violations.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye refused to say what venues are being considered, but said Oslo “is a good choice.” He said further details about the talks would be

announced by government chief negotiator Teresita Deles in a news conference later Tuesday.

In a statement, Arroyo linked the peace process to her reform agenda for the Philippines’ economy and its security—both major issues for a presidential election on May 10.

“I will pursue peace because it is morally right, and it is required by our national interest,” she said. “Meanwhile, the armed forces and police shall continue to enforce law and order.”

The CPP and the 10,000-strong NPA have been declared terrorist organizations by the United States and the European Union.

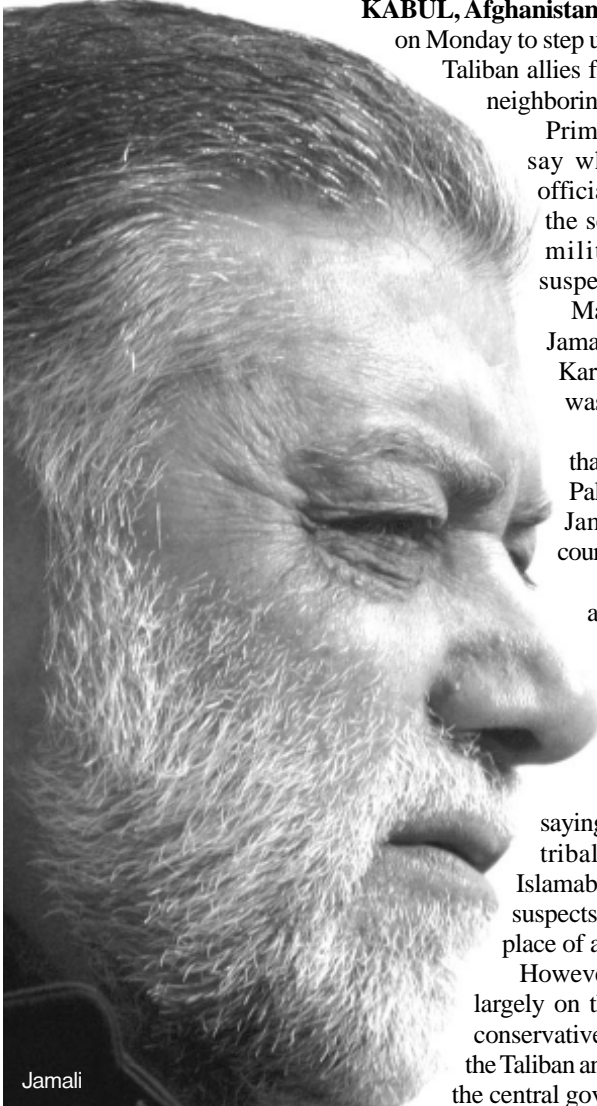
Arroyo’s announcement on Tuesday follows a series of informal talks with National Democratic Front leaders in exile in the Netherlands.

The communist group did not publicly react to Arroyo’s statement on Tuesday and it was unclear whether the development was a true breakthrough.



Arroyo

Pakistan’s PM makes visit to Afghanistan



Jamali

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Pakistan’s prime minister promised on Monday to step up efforts to stop al-Qaida militants and their Taliban allies from using Pakistan as a base for attacks in neighboring Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali did not say what measures Pakistan would take, but officials from a key Pakistani tribal region along the semiautonomous border announced a new militia to help the government capture suspected terrorists.

Making his first official visit to Afghanistan, Jamali held talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai in Kabul and said later that his country was determined to fight extremism.

“We want to ensure, and do our double best, that there is no crisscross from Afghanistan into Pakistan, or from Pakistan into Afghanistan,” Jamali said at a joint news conference in a courtyard of Karzai’s palace in the Afghan capital.

Afghan officials have urged Pakistan to take a tougher line against al-Qaida and Taliban militants who are launching attacks in Afghan territory and then retreating into Pakistan. At least 36 people, most civilians, have been killed in such cross-border attacks in the last week.

Jamali defended Pakistan’s efforts to date, saying it has deployed 65,000 troops to the border’s tribal belt and is manning 800 border posts. Islamabad has also rounded up hundreds of al-Qaida suspects in the area, thought to be a possible hiding place of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden.

However, the success of the crackdown depends largely on the cooperation of the border belt’s deeply conservative people, many of whom sympathize with the Taliban and have a long tradition of independence from the central government.

Suspected Taliban kill 4 Afghan officers

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—Dozens of suspected Taliban fighters armed with assault rifles attacked a police checkpoint Monday and killed four policemen, a provincial governor said.

The attack occurred in the southwestern province of Nimroz, said Kareem Baravi, the Nimroz governor.

Authorities have stepped up security in Nimroz in recent months to track suspected al-Qaida fugitives and fighters of the Taliban militia believed to be hiding there.

The Taliban, whose government was overthrown in the U.S.-led offensive in Afghanistan in late 2001, have regrouped and increased attacks against police and soldiers to prevent them working for U.S. troops or President Hamid Karzai’s government.

The violence has been concentrated in the south and east, near the Pakistani border. But there have also been incidents in the north.

In Mazar-e-Sharif, the main northern city, a bomb exploded Sunday evening in front of the office of the French aid group Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, injuring a guard and a worker, said Quadra-tullah Hamdard, a spokesman for the Afghan military in the city. Two employees have been detained as part of the investigation.

On Thursday, police removed a bomb from a ditch near a United Nations office in the city and destroyed it.

mell
+red/blue

World

New wall in Jerusalem may be permanent

By RAVI NESSMAN
AP WRITER

ABU DIS, West Bank (AP)—With the thud of tons of concrete hitting soft earth, Israel worked Monday to build a 25-foot-tall wall on the edge of Jerusalem, signaling Israel’s encirclement of the city is becoming permanent.

The wall, running down the center of a main road in the Palestinian neighborhood of Abu Dis, separates thousands of residents from Jerusalem, a city they consider home.

The towering new wall replaces a far shorter divider that had slowed, but not stopped, the flow of people and goods between the West Bank and Jerusalem in this area.

It is part of a barrier Israel is building around much of the West Bank with the stated aim of keeping out Palestinian militants responsible for suicide bombings that have killed hundreds of Israelis in the past three years.

Palestinian leaders have reacted with anger to the building of the barrier, a line of

walls, trenches, fences and razor wire that snakes through parts of West Bank land that Palestinians claim for a future state.

Palestinian officials have taken to referring to the West Bank barrier as a new Berlin Wall. That wall—built to prevent East Germans from fleeing to the West - was between 11.5 feet and 13.8 feet tall.

Although Israel says the barrier can be moved if the sides ever negotiate a peace treaty, Israel’s critics say it is in effect creating a new border that gobbles up almost half the West Bank and cuts it off from Jerusalem.

Along its path, the barrier has cut Palestinians off from their fields and schools, their hospitals and businesses.

But in Abu Dis, a suburb in the shadow of Jerusalem’s Mount of Olives, the new wall strikes far deeper emotional chords.

During previous peace efforts, negotiators had proposed Abu Dis as the center of a compromise Palestinian capital that would have incorporated parts of east Jerusalem—the part



Construction goes on as Israeli bulldozers and cranes build an 8-meter-tall wall between the outskirts of Jerusalem and the West Bank in the village of Abu Dis Monday, Jan. 12, 2004.

of the city that Israel captured in 1967 and that Palestinians want as their future capital.

The building slated to hold the future Palestinian parliament is in Abu Dis, as are many

government offices. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia lives there.

Many Abu Dis residents consider themselves Jerusalemites, carry the blue identification

card of residents of Israel and pay Jerusalem city taxes. They go to Jerusalem for work and school, to shop and visit family, to collect marriage licenses and death certificates.

But the new wall puts a stop to that. With Arab neighborhoods on both sides, it also separates relatives.

“This is unnatural and unacceptable,” said Salah Bader, an Abu Dis official. “They are tightening the rope around our necks”

Construction crews arrived Saturday night and began tearing down the old 6-foot-tall concrete and barbed wire barrier that had become a local joke.

Students, laborers, businessmen in suits and even elderly women had scrambled over the barrier daily, stepping on boxes and large rocks to reach the top.

But there was no laughter Monday, when the construction crews erected in its place an impassable wall four times as tall that runs down the center of Shayah Street, a road of shops and apartments that marked the once invisible divide between Abu Dis and the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ras al Amud.

As earth movers ripped down the short, graffiti-scrawled old barrier, bulldozers dug out a long pit that cranes filled with the massive slabs of the new 25-foot-tall barrier.

Queen Mary 2 leaves on maiden voyage

LONDON (AP)—The world’s largest cruise ship, Queen Mary 2, set sail for the United States on its maiden voyage Monday, carrying 2,600 passengers who paid up to \$48,000 for the privilege.

The 150,000-ton Cunard Line vessel left the southern English port of Southampton on the 14-day journey to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., its first voyage with fare-paying passengers.

Although Cunard has denied reports of a terrorist threat against the vessel, security was tight and police maintained a high profile.

The maiden departure, marked by fireworks and a brass band, was an hour late.

As a small flotilla of boats turned out to watch the giant liner pull away, passengers lining the ship’s balconies waved Union Jack flags and threw streamers.

Ceremonies welcoming the vessel to Southampton on Dec. 26 were subdued out of respect for those killed when a gangway collapsed Nov. 15 at the shipyard in St. Nazaire, France, where the ship was built.

Thousands of people watched last week as Queen Elizabeth II officially launched the \$1 billion ship, which is named for her grandmother Queen Mary, wife of King George V, who reigned from 1910 to 1936.

The new cruise liner took more than five years to build. It is 1,138 feet long and 238 feet high—as tall as a 21-story building. It will take over the trans-Atlantic duties of the Queen Elizabeth 2 ocean liner.

Fox supports Bush proposal on immigration

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP)—President Bush won strong support from Mexican President Vicente Fox on Monday for his new immigration proposals as the two leaders worked to smooth strained relations and pursue broader trade ties.

At a joint news conference, Fox, who opposed the war in Iraq, congratulated Bush for the capture of Saddam Hussein by American forces. “He will be taken to trial, to judgment. We fully support that,” the Mexican president said.

Bush offered a forceful defense of the war, despite U.S. casualty totals approaching 500. “The decision I made is the right one for America. And history will provide it is the right one for the world,” he said.

On another issue, Bush declined to criticize former Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, whose new book says the administration aimed to topple the Iraqi government even before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States.

“First, let me say I appreciate former Secretary O’Neill’s service to our country,” he said. He said that when he became president, he inherited a policy of “regime change” from former President Clinton and adopted it as his own. “So we were fashioning policy along those lines and then all of a sudden Sept. 11 hit,” he said.

The leaders seemed eager to overcome past differences. Bush

invited Fox to his ranch on March 5-6, and said at one point they were good enough friends to disagree “without the loss of friendship.”

Bush said that both he and Fox were committed to free trade and that trade between the two countries had grown over the past decade—the lifespan of the North American Free Trade

Agreement - from \$100 billion to \$232 billion.

Fox said Mexico had the lowest unemployment rate in the Americas, and he attributed that to the NAFTA treaty with the United States and Canada. “Trade undoubtedly reduces poverty. Trade among countries promotes human capital,” he said.

The two countries are part of

a broader new Central American trade pact that is awaiting approval by several governments.

The issues of Iraq and immigration had produced sustained disagreements over the past two years, and both came up at the news conference.

Fox said Bush’s immigration proposal marked “a very important step forward,” and

said he hoped it would be approved by Congress.

The president is expected to unveil details of his plan as part of the State of the Union address on Jan. 20. Administration officials say the plan will provide legal status to millions of undocumented immigrants working in the United States. It is unclear how the proposal will be received by lawmakers.

Troops disperse Iraqis rioting for food

By NADIA ABOU EL-MAGD
AP WRITER

KUT, Iraq (AP)—Ukrainian soldiers fired into the air Monday to disperse hundreds of Iraqis who rioted for jobs and food as a second southern Shiite Muslim city was rocked by unrest—a barometer of rising frustration with the U.S. led-occupation in a region of Iraq considered friendly to the Americans.

Also Monday, a roadside bomb in the capital killed one American soldier and wounded two, bringing the U.S. death toll in the Iraqi conflict to 495. Large explosions rocked central Baghdad later in the day, but officials reported no casualties.

Trouble started in Kut, 95 miles southeast of Baghdad, when about 400 protesters marched for a third straight day on a government building to demand jobs. Someone in the crowd threw a grenade at police and Ukrainian soldiers guarding the building, injuring four Iraqi policemen and one Ukrainian, according to Lt. Zafer Wedad.

The Ukrainians then fired in the air to disperse the crowd, injuring one protester, Wedad said. He said the demonstrators hurled bricks at the building and trashed a post office in the city.

In a similar protest in Amarah on

Sunday, waves of protesters rushed British troops guarding the city hall before being pushed back. On Saturday, clashes in Amarah killed six protesters and wounded at least 11.

Unrest in the Shiite areas has spread as the country's leading Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, has spoken out against the U.S.-backed formula for transferring power to the Iraqis.

In a full-page newspaper advertisement Monday, al-Sistani repeated his demand that a proposed provisional legislature be elected rather than chosen by regional committees as called for under a plan endorsed by the U.S.-led coalition and the Iraqi Governing Council.

Al-Sistani is highly influential among Iraq's majority Shiites.

No details were available about the death in Baghdad of the 1st Armored Division soldier. Most of the U.S. deaths in Iraq have occurred since President Bush declared an end to major combat on May 1.

Still, U.S. officials said Monday that insurgent attacks against coalition forces declined to an average of 17 a day in the past week, compared to 30 a day before Saddam Hussein was captured on Dec. 13. Most of the attacks are believed carried



U.S. Army snipers of the 1-22 Infantry division (Task Force Iron Horse) sit on their humvee as they leave the military base in Tikrit, Iraq, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2004.

out by supporters of the ousted regime.

In the late Monday blasts, Iraqi and U.S. security officials said at least two mortars exploded near the Baghdad Hotel in the center of the capital. At least one round exploded in the Tigris River and the other exploded on the river bank, U.S. troops said. There were no casualties, the Americans said.

Also Monday, another roadside bomb exploded near an Army convoy in Ramadi, a town west of Baghdad, but the military said no U.S. casualties were reported. Residents said two Iraqis were killed when the Americans opened fire after the attack.

On Friday, U.S. soldiers uncovered a "large weapons cache" with the help of an Iraqi in Ramadi, the U.S. military said in a statement Monday.

It said the Iraqi led the troops to a house, where they found dozens of rocket-propelled grenades and a handful of launchers, nearly 220 pounds of explosives, 16 remote controlled homemade bombs and two surface-to-air missiles, the military said in a statement.

Also acting on an Iraqi tip, U.S. soldiers shot dead seven of the estimated 40 members of an armed gang allegedly trying to steal oil from a pipeline south of Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, the Army said Monday.

Summit of Americas begins amid disputes

By LISA J. ADAMS
AP WRITER

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP)—Leaders from across the Americas pledged to strengthen democracy and fight terrorism Monday, despite regional conflicts and cross-border disputes that threaten the unity of the hemisphere.

As one of the first speakers at the 34-nation Summit of the Americas, President Bush reached out to the rest of Latin America, saying his government was committed to "embracing the challenge of ... bringing all the hemisphere's people into the expanding circle of development."

Bush added that all countries "must work to provide quality education and quality health care for all our citizens, especially those who suffer from HIV/AIDS."

But the president also made reference to the issues that have led many Latin Americans to criticize his administration, including a proposal to ban corrupt nations from the Organization of American States.

"Today, I signed a proclamation denying corrupt officials entry into my country. I urge other countries to take similar actions."

He took aim at Venezuela, whose president, Hugo Chavez, recently accused the United States of "sticking its nose" into his country's affairs when it urged that he allow a referendum on recalling him from office.

Bush said the "support of democratic institutions ... gives hope and strength to those struggling to preserve their God-given rights, whether in Venezuela, or Haiti, or Bolivia."

Chavez told reporters earlier that the United States was lacking information. "We are working to make clear to the world what we are. ... Venezuela has a vigorous, participative democracy with a country rebuilding itself from scratch."

Chavez toned down his comments from Sunday, when he said during his weekly television show that he was worried the United States would promote his unconstitutional ouster if the recall referendum didn't succeed.

In addition to opposing the U.S.

anti-corruption initiative, both Venezuela and Brazil have argued against setting a firm deadline in the summit declaration for a free trade agreement of the Americas.

On Sunday, Mexico President Vicente Fox indicated he didn't believe the trade agreement should be included in the summit's agenda.

Although disagreements on various issues threatened to hold up the summit's final declaration, leaders made an effort Monday to show that relations between their countries were growing stronger.

The most visible example of that effort came when Fox reiterated his support for Bush's new migration program and Bush asked his counterpart to visit him at his Texas ranch in March. Fox accepted the invitation.

Fox had planned to travel to Bush's ranch in 2002, but canceled his trip in protest after U.S. authorities refused to halt the execution of a Mexican convicted of killing a Dallas police officer. That, and Fox's refusal to back the Iraq war, strained ties between Mexico and the United States.

told The Associated Press. "If it is not reversed, there will be no elections. There is no reason to participate in so-called elections where hard-line thinkers run without any rivals."

The Guardian Council, which comprises 12 members chosen by Khamenei, has disqualified more than 3,000 of the 8,200 people who filed papers to run for the parliament's 290 seats, lawmakers have said. State broadcast media controlled by hard-liners said the candidates were disqualified because they lacked "the necessary legal qualifications."

If they stand, the disqualifications will be an additional blow for the reformers. The reformists have lost

popularity because of their perceived failure to deliver on promises of liberalization, and had hoped to get a boost from the elections.

The European Union's foreign policy chief warned the elections would not be credible unless the disqualifications are reversed.

"The fairness of the elections is the process that leads to elections," said Javier Solana, who is visiting to discuss Iran's relations with Europe. It would be "difficult to explain (to the European parliament) how a lawmaker can't be a candidate."

Khamenei said Monday he would intervene if the dispute was not resolved, state television reported.

Iran's reformists eye elections boycott

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—A showdown between Iran's hard-liners and liberals deepened Monday as reformist lawmakers barred from upcoming elections threatened to boycott the vote and supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei promised to intervene if the crisis is not resolved soon.

For the second day in a row, legislators who were among those barred from the Feb. 20 elections held a sit-in protest in the parliament building. The hard-line Guardian Council disqualified more than 80 lawmakers, all reformists.

"We will continue our sit-in until politically motivated disqualifications are reversed," lawmaker Elaheh Koolae

Sharon says he'd seek OK before Israeli pullback

By STEVE WEIZMAN
AP WRITER

JERUSALEM (AP)—Prime Minister Ariel Sharon assured parliament Monday he would seek its approval and consult with the United States before imposing on the Palestinians what he said would be a temporary boundary.

A key Sharon ally, meanwhile, set a timetable for the first time, saying a partial withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the dismantling of some Israeli settlements could begin within six months.

Parliamentary approval is not assured, however.

Sharon's hard-line allies complain he has abandoned his pro-settlement philosophy. The moderate opposition would welcome the dismantling of settlements, but suspects Sharon is trying to turn what he bills as a temporary solution into an unworkable permanent one—the creation of a Palestinian state in only about half the West Bank.

Sharon reiterated Monday he remains committed to the U.S.-led "road map" plan, which envisions a peace deal by 2005, with a Palestinian state as a centerpiece.

However, he said, if it becomes apparent "within a few months" that the Palestinians are not meeting their obligations - particularly dismantling militant groups—Israel would move unilaterally. Both sides have so far failed to move forward on the peace plan.

"I will, of course, bring the steps

that the government decides on to the Knesset for approval, so that we can hold a serious and comprehensive debate on the subject," Sharon said.

In his speech, Sharon did not refer to the possible dismantling of settlements, apparently to avoid further angering his political allies. On Sunday, leading members of his Likud party joined settler leaders and tens of thousands of their supporters to protest a possible pullback.

Sharon also said he would consult with the United States before making a final decision. Washington has said the conflict will only be solved with a negotiated solution.

The Palestinians are increasingly worried about Sharon's plan.

The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, said Israel may be able to impose a boundary, but "will not have a partner on the Palestinian side."

Erekat said the Palestinians remain committed to a two-state solution with a future Palestine made up of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem - lands Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war - but that an agreed partition may become impossible if Sharon forges ahead with his plan.

However, Sharon seems ready to act.

He told parliament he has asked his incoming national security adviser, Maj. Gen. Giora Eiland, to oversee preparations for unilateral steps. Eiland reportedly is already in touch with government ministries to coordinate a partial withdrawal.



Sharon

KAMBARA

Life & Style

SAIPAN HASH HOUSE HARRIERS

Saipan's most *eccentric* running group



By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

At a jungle in Marpi, over 40 hash runners scrambled through a tangle of vines, tree branches and steep banks as they followed unseen trails leading to the Wing Beach, much like restless hounds on the scent of frightened hares.

The runners entered the jungle at the vicinity of the Banzai Cliff after spotting ribbons tied on trees and spots of white powder on the ground that gave clues to the complex trail within the jungle.

Composed of a varied mix of men and women, the runners braved ravines, clung to ropes as they climbed down steep portions of the jungle downhill, and climbed through rocks and twigs on uphill terrain during the Saipan Hash House Harriers' 999th run Saturday.

The Saipan group is just one among at least 1,600 groups in different parts of the world. The World Hash House Harriers' website describes hash run as "a more social version" of Hare and Hounds, a game in which two or more runners start out first and scatter paper or any other mark to form a trail, while trying to keep

ahead of the other runners who want to catch them before reaching a designated place. After the chase, the game ends up in a social activity known as the "On In" or "Down Down."

Saturday's hash run ended up with a bonfire at the Wing Beach, where participants enjoyed hamburgers, soda and beer.

Saipan's hash group has a "tyrant" it calls "Haj F. Kramdem Sir!" or Kramdem, for short. Kramdem—DFS Galleria executive Wolfe Mojica—presides over the gathering called "religion," leading the group in the exchange of jokes.

Like Kramdem, the eccentric running club has odd nicknames for participants. "Dog Leg"—Division of Environmental Quality environmental engineer Brian Bearden—invited this reporter to join the hash run last Saturday. Dog Leg joined the group since 1995, which meant that he has had crossed over hundreds of unique trails.

"It's a great physical activity," he said, adding that the weekly Saturday activity allows participants to see places that others do not usually see, besides meeting friends and getting relief from the pressures of work and other obligations during weekdays.

"What is the biggest waterfall on Saipan?" asked Pinocular. He answered: "A 25-foot waterfall." He simply

reiterated that participants in hash runs get to see unusual places, some of which are even undocumented.

Pinocular is actually John Sherbo, who used to chair the Math and Science department of the Northern Marianas

back to the U.S. several days later.

Participants in the 1,000th run will assemble in front of the Bank of Guam building in Garapan as early as 2:30pm this Saturday. Before this, the SHHH will host a reception party at the Pacific



College. Sherbo flew to Saipan from Kansas City, Missouri, in time for the 999th hash run. He intends to join Saipan's 1,000th hash run this coming Saturday, Jan. 17, and will be flying

Islands Club's beachside on Friday, from 6pm to 8pm.

"And then on Sunday, Jan. 18, there will be a fun-filled day at PIC, which would include a delectable brunch buffet at the Magellan Restaurant beginning at 11am. It would be followed by an afternoon at PIC's famous waterpark. PIC is offering special package rate for the hashers," according to the group's media statement.

Entry cost for the 1,000th run is \$40. Those who are interested to join could call Bobbi Grizzard (a.k.a. "Ciega") at tel. no. 3229464 for more information.



Soccer stars are fashion's new sex symbols

By **DANIELA PETROFF**
AP FASHION WRITER

MILAN, Italy (AP)—Fashion has a new sex symbol: the soccer player, who joins rock and movie stars as icons of male style.

From Giorgio Armani to Dolce and Gabbana, from Donatella Versace to Vivienne Westwood, the ready-to-wear designers showing their 2004-05 men's winter wears on the Milan runway, are courting Europe's soccer heroes. They are dedicating photo exhibits and books to the sport, asking players to model on the runway, showering them with invitations to shows and after-show parties, and above all drawing inspiration from their off-the-field style.

"They're the new icons of contemporary style: young, quite often good-looking and very, very rich," said Stefano Gabbana who along with partner Domenico Dolce dedicated a coffee-table book "Calcio"—Italian for "Soccer"—to the sport and its players.

AP

Soccer player Thomas Helveg of Denmark takes the catwalk during the Dirk Bikkembergs Fall/Winter 2004/2005 fashion collection, presented in Milan, Italy, Sunday, Jan. 11, 2004.

Jackson's advisers examine his finances

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—Michael Jackson's inner circle met at a posh Beverly Hills hotel Monday to look at the entertainer's business affairs, four days before his first court appearance on child molestation charges.

The meeting was attended by attorneys, managers and accountants for the pop superstar, along with Nation of Islam leaders.

Jackson's lawyer, Mark Geragos, came out of a closed-door session at the Beverly Hills Hotel suite and allowed an Associated Press reporter and photographer into the room to ask a few questions, seeking to end the atmosphere of secrecy that had surrounded the gathering.

"This is going on throughout the day," he said, indicating that other

members of the Jackson team would be participating later.

When asked why Jackson, 45, was not present, Geragos said, "Who says he isn't?" However, Jackson could not be seen in the room.

Members of Jackson's closest advisers were gathered around a large table in the suite. At the head of the table was Leonard Muhammad, a high-ranking official of the Nation of Islam who has been described as an adviser to Jackson. Other Nation of Islam members were in an area outside the suite.

Also at the meeting were Jackson's accountant, Alan Whitman; his music manager Charles Koppelman; his civil lawyer, Zia Modabber and other members of the Geragos law firm.

Amid metal outdoor cafe tables and a replica of Rome's Trevi Fountain set up under a tent in the designing duo's downtown Milan headquarters, models evoked the lore of the "Dolce Vita" and its hero, the late actor Marcello Mastroianni.

Suits with a three-buttoned jacket with marked shoulder and soft but never baggy trouser, three-quarter coats with sumptuous fur lining, classic camel hair coats, and ultra-soft cashmere sweaters all combine to create a relaxed but elegant look. The turtleneck under a suit harked back to the best of Mastroianni; the coat worn with T-shirt was contemporary Beckham.

Vivienne Westwood and Christopher Bailey, designer for Burberry, were in town from merry old England.

The eccentric Westwood filled her winter menswear wardrobe Sunday with everything from kilts and high-heeled boots to hooded sweaters and stiff tight-fitting jackets reminiscent of the armor of a medieval warrior.

When asked if the Nation of Islam was handling any aspect of Jackson's financial affairs, Koppelman told reporters outside the suite, "No sir."

When asked who was in charge of the meeting, Geragos said: "This is a very egalitarian group."

Security at the hotel was high and other guests were unaware of the meeting until they reached the end of the driveway where fans and camera crews were assembled.

One of the celebrity guests at the hotel, Donald Trump, stopped to chat with reporters and was asked what he thought of the Jackson case.

"I think they're trying to make money off Michael and it's a shame," Trump said.

Young doctors working too many hours

By **JASON STRAZIUSO**
AP WRITER

In early July, days after new rules were supposed to limit the number of hours he and other new doctors could work, Dr. Troy Madsen almost made a fatal mistake.

A first-year resident at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins Hospital, Madsen was on hour 32 of a 34-hour shift when he failed to make sure a crucial blood test was given to a heart patient.

Complications related to that mistake led to a setback that could have killed the patient, Madsen later learned. The man ultimately recovered, but Madsen was horrified at what his mistake almost meant.

The 28-year-old doctor's work shift violated new rules limiting residents to no more than 30 hours straight and no more than 80 hours a week on average.

"It was my first week in residency, and the whole thing was just overwhelming," he said.

He e-mailed outside authorities, and Johns Hopkins—ranked by U.S. News & World Report as America's top hospital for 13 years running—was temporarily threatened with losing accreditation for its internal medicine residency program, an earthquake that rocked the medical community.



AP

Dr. Troy Madsen, an intern at Ohio State University Medical Center, poses outside the emergency room Saturday, Jan. 10, 2004, in Columbus, Ohio.

Today, medical experts say Johns Hopkins and most other programs comply with the new residents' work rules adopted last July. But the medical community almost universally acknowledges that some programs still overwork young doctors.

Two resident organizations, which believe the rules should become law, say they've gotten dozens of reports that programs are violating the work rules.

"Standards do not produce perfect compliance," said Ingrid Philbert, director of field activities for the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, or the ACGME, the body that carried out the July 1 rules. "There are always a few programs that don't follow the rules."

Justin Wood, a spokesman for the union Committee for Residents and Interns, said a common story he hears is residents are told "more or less explicitly" to falsify time sheets.

Sometimes residents, particularly those in difficult specialties, work long hours by choice.

"The kind of people who are attracted to surgery ... want to stay. It's hard to push people out the door sometimes," said Dr. Larry Kaiser, the surgery department chair at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

A resident in Philadelphia, who asked not to be identified for fear of the retaliation, said she worked a 34-hour shift last week because she didn't want to dump work on her colleagues.

Dr. Lauren Oshman, president of the American Medical Student Association, said there are too many disincentives for reporting violations: no whistleblower protection, resentment from peers, and the risk of getting one's own program discredited.

Girl looks for best lure to reel in her Mr. Right

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN



Dear Abby

without scaring him away? Are there any creative, nonthreatening kosher ways to spark their interest in me, as well?

I'm afraid I will not be able to catch the person of my dreams.

LOOKING FOR MR. RIGHT

DEAR LOOKING: Just be yourself. And if you're smart, you'll invent excuses to spend more time on campus. Join the staff of the school newspaper, study in the library, work out at the school gym, get a part-time job on campus. It will give you a reason to interact with eligible "fellow" students. (And by the way, another technique for getting to know someone is to ask if you can study together before an exam.)

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend, "Andy," is a Marine. When he was fighting in Iraq, he sent me e-mails saying how much he missed me and couldn't wait to be with me.

When Andy came home, he was a completely different person!

We got pregnant soon after, and he seemed OK with it at first. Then he was sent back to Iraq. He started fighting with me long-distance and telling me to get an abortion, but he said he still loved me.

About two months ago, he stopped telling me he loves me. He never talks about our baby that's due soon. He has never helped financially.

Andy is now back from Iraq, and he says he loves me but has "a lot to work out." He's so distant now. What should I do? Please help.

IN LOVE AND HURTING

DEAR HURTING: You both need help. Your boyfriend may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Fortunately, there is help for it through the Veterans Administration. Please urge him to get it now before it affects his future—and yours and the baby's.

Until Andy is emotionally stronger, you will have to find support from friends and family. I wish you both luck.

DEAR ABBY: I live in a town that is large enough that everyone does not know everyone else, but small enough that jobs are not easy to come by.

My niece is a lovely, moral girl. She works in the photo department of a drugstore, where one of her duties is to monitor the one-hour photo machine. Recently she developed some photos of a young female customer that were frankly pornographic. Is this legal?

CONCERNED AUNT IN SMALLTOWN, USA

DEAR CONCERNED: A judge once said it may not be easy to define pornography, but he knew it when he saw it. Unfortunately, there's quite a stretch between what's tasteful and what's legal. Because what is pornographic and what is acceptable may have to do with community standards and can vary from place to place, perhaps the person to answer that question would be your chief of police.

P.S. If the customer is underage, the police should be notified anyway.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$10 (U.S. funds)

'Frasier' to end its 11-season run

By DAVID BAUDER
AP TELEVISION WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—After some brief talk of keeping the show going for a 12th season next fall, NBC said Monday that its five-time Emmy-winning comedy, "Frasier," will call it quits in May.

This was widely assumed to be its last season, but in recent months Kelsey Grammer, who has portrayed the high-strung psychologist Frasier Crane for 20 years since the character originated on "Cheers," had said he was open to continuing.

"The finances would not have worked for another season," said NBC spokeswoman Rebecca Marks.

"Frasier" won the Emmy for best comedy for five straight years, from 1994 to 1998.

Its exit means that NBC will go into next season without both of the popular, urbane comedies that have defined it as a network for the past decade. The last episode of "Friends" will also air in May.

"Frasier" lost popularity as it aged, but it remained a mainstay on Tuesday nights for NBC, averaging 11.1 million viewers a week. The network has tried, and failed, to develop other long-lasting hit comedies.

The show's ratings slide has continued despite a critical revival this season when the original writing team of Christopher Lloyd and Joe Keenan returned after being gone for three years.

'Survivor' announces returning all-stars

NEW YORK (AP)—Get ready to welcome Rudy, Richard, Tina and other favorite "Survivor" castaways for a rematch on the upcoming "Survivor: All-Stars" competition.

The chosen 18, representing all seven of CBS' past "Survivor" seasons, were announced Monday during the network's "Early Show." They face off when the hit reality-challenge series returns for its new edition after the Super Bowl telecast on Feb. 1.

The contestants are:

- Richard Hatch, winner of the original "Survivor: Pulau Tiga," along with Rudy Boesch, Sue Hawk and Jenna Lewis.

Ross to accept plea in DUI charge

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP)—There will be no trial for pop diva Diana Ross on drunken driving charges.

During a pretrial hearing in Tucson City Court, Ross' lawyers said she's ready to accept a plea agreement and will change her earlier "not guilty" plea at a hearing scheduled for Feb. 9.

Her trial had been scheduled for this month.

Details of the agreement, including what type of plea Ross may enter or whether any type of sentence might be involved, were not released.



Cast members from the television comedy series "Frasier" are shown in this undated photo.

"It will end on a high note," Marks said.

NBC was paying Paramount, the show's producers, an estimated \$5.2 million per show licensing fee. As with most long-running shows, costs were mounting and

there was discussion of Grammer taking a pay cut to continue another season.

This season marked two milestones important to Grammer. His 20-year run playing Frasier Crane—a character introduced

during the third season of "Cheers"—ties James Arness of "Gunsmoke" for the longest stretch an actor has played a single character in prime time. "Frasier" will also have lasted 11 seasons, the same duration as "Cheers."

DiCamillo, Gerstein win kid book awards

SAN DIEGO (AP)—Author Kate DiCamillo and illustrator Mordicai Gerstein are among this year's winners of the Newbery and Caldecott awards for children's literature.

Ursula K. Le Guin, whose many books include "The Left Hand of Darkness" and "The Beginning Place," received a lifetime achievement prize.

The awards were announced Monday by the American Library Association, which is meeting this week in San Diego.

DiCamillo received the Newbery, given for the year's best writing, for "The Tale of Despereaux," the story of a small mouse in love with a princess. The Caldecott prize, given for the best illustration, went to Gerstein for "The Man Who Walked Between the Towers," the story of a young Frenchman who in 1974 walked on a tightrope between the World Trade Center twin towers.

Other winners included author Angela Johnson ("The First Past Last") and illustrator Ashley Bryan ("Beautiful Blackbird"), recipients of the Coretta Scott King prizes for the best African American children's writer and children's illustrator.



Diana Ross performs at the Jazz at Lincoln Center concert, "Here's to the Ladies: a Celebration of Great Women in Jazz," in New York, in this Monday, Nov. 17, 2003 file photo.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

BOW-WOW!

Solution: 6 letters

G T H W O H S R B F F I N S D

U O I S S T E ① D H C E T O D

I R D U A K ⑦ H E R L E M O E

D A H L C ⑥ U E E G S E B G E

E L A O L S L L A S S E N T D

L L C U K U I E A T R I T E A

D O E Y H E B B I M T U E A S

O C E N W A D C A N M F N T G

O L L T N S U N U R A A E I O

P D T A E E B H A T K P M K D

Y O N T M R K O I L R H S A S

R P T E E I R O X H T I N E L

A E P E I M N I D E C E C I E

R N D U E R A A E O R A H K D

E Z T I P S F T Y R R U F S S

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Akita, Animal, Bark, Basset, Beagle, Biscuit, Bite, Boxer, Breed, Bulldog, Chihuahua, Cocker, Collar, Dane, Deed, Diet, Doberman, Dogs, Domestic, Feed, Friend, Furry, Guide, Heel, Hunting, Hush, Husky, Kennel, Leash, Mammal, Mutt, Odor, Pets, Poodle, Puppy, Races, Rare, Rottweiler, Setter, Shetland, Show, Sled, Sniff, Spaniel, Spitz, Tame, Teeth, Terrier, Tricks, Yelp.

Yesterday's Answer: Mirrors

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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Datum

5 Solidify

8 High point

12 Melville novel

13 Veneration

14 Hotel employee

15 Booklet

17 Plus-size fashion model

18 Midwestern city

19 Paul Newman movie

21 Wye follower

22 Leave a lasting impression

23 Early hrs.

26 Ad-dressee

28 Catcalls?

31 Picks up the check

33 Gridiron grp.

35 Let fall

36 Beat

38 Grease

40 Firmament

41 Down the — (in the offing)

43 Serbian city

45 Command

47 Houdini's specialty

51 Enthusiastic

52 Runner-up in 1968

54 "The Producers" star

55 "— Yankee ..."

56 Existed

57 Pastoral piece

58 Pink-slip

59 Shows curiosity

4 November birth-stone

5 Commercial sailing ship of yore

6 Dolly the clone, e.g.

7 River of forgetfulness

8 Fined

9 Anti-insect compounds

10 Non-speaking performer

11 "Broadway My Way" singer Linda

16 Long of Louisiana

20 Cash dispenser, for short

23 Suitable

24 Daisy —

25 Orchestral composition

27 ET's craft

29 Stir-fry pan

30 Agent

32 Big name in mail order

34 "Wichita —"

37 Sanctions

39 Sylvester's impediment

42 Guiding philosophy

44 Unstressed vowel

45 Indonesian island

46 "Zounds!"

48 Belligerent deity

49 — up (improve)

50 Spud's buds

53 Ms. Thurman

DOWN

1 Dandies

2 Part of a Latin 101 trio

3 Freebie

1 Dandies

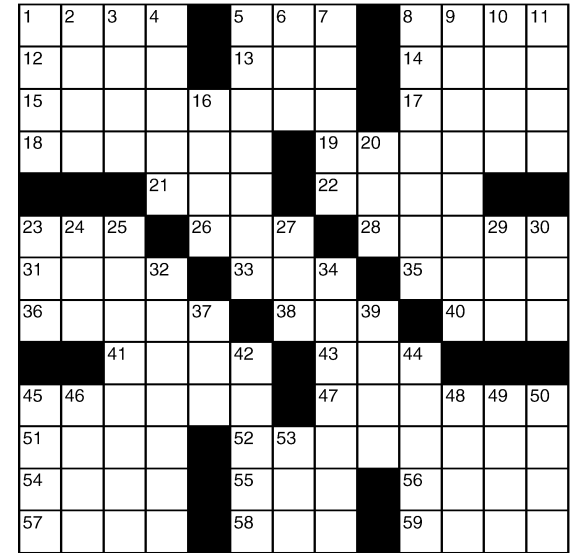
2 Part of a Latin 101 trio

3 Freebie

Solution time: 21 mins.

M A C Y S H Y T H U S
A C R E W E E H A R P
T H E S P I A N E S S E
H E W E N D P S H A W
T A G P E A
F I G H T R E G U L A R
A C M E Z A P R I S E
Q U A R T E T J U D A S
E O N B U S
S H A F T O L D A C T
A U T O T H E O R I Z E
I G O R E M S O R A N
D O P E A S S B Y R D

Yesterday's answer 1-14



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY
Andy Rooney, LL Cool J, Faye Dunaway, Jack Jones

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Obstacles have stood in your way and you have had to fight hard to get ahead. Your approach must change before you will feel any relief. Putting too much pressure on yourself has been part of your problem in the past. It's often the simple route that brings the most in return. Your numbers are 8, 13, 18, 25, 36, 44

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)
You will be inclined to jump to conclusions and get yourself into hot water if you don't listen before you react. Nothing will be as it appears. It's time to sit back and let others come to you. ☺☺



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
The more you try to get done, the better it will be for you. You will impress others with your responsible attitude and capture the interest of someone who is looking for the right person for an important job. ☺☺☺



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
Plan some form of social activity tonight. You are likely to have more to do with children today. You will be amazed by how much you can learn. ☺☺☺☺



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
It may be necessary to do a little damage control with the family. Limitations may put you in an awkward position. Pull in all your resources; family members may not be eager to follow your orders. ☺☺



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
The information you discover while defending yourself today will turn out to be extremely valuable. Take any opportunity to do a little traveling. ☺☺☺☺



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Don't let anyone stand in the way of your progress. Keep your past experiences in mind and you won't slip into the same pitfalls. Moneymaking ideas will work if presented properly. ☺☺☺



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Don't let your emotions get the better of you. The more stable you appear, the better you will do today. Develop your creative ideas. ☺☺☺



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
You will have some excellent thoughts when it comes to money matters. Keep your feet planted firmly on the ground and you will make the right decisions. ☺☺☺



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
Restlessness will lead to changes in your personal life. Talk out any differences you may be feeling. Reforms can be made and solutions easily found. People with similar interests will support you. ☺☺☺☺



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Don't get all worked up if things don't go your way. Expect to have to put in extra time and work. Change is probably inevitable, so prepare to accept it. ☺☺



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Take whatever steps are necessary in order to assure that you will reach your goals. Travel may come into play, especially if it will bring you the information you require. ☺☺☺☺☺



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Like it or not, you will be saddled with responsibilities today. You may have to deal with someone else's personal property or financial matters. Do your own research before making a decision. ☺☺☺

BIRTHDAY BABY: You have a progressive attitude and approach to life that takes everyone by surprise. Your peers look up to you and you stand out in the crowd because of your strong beliefs and dedication.

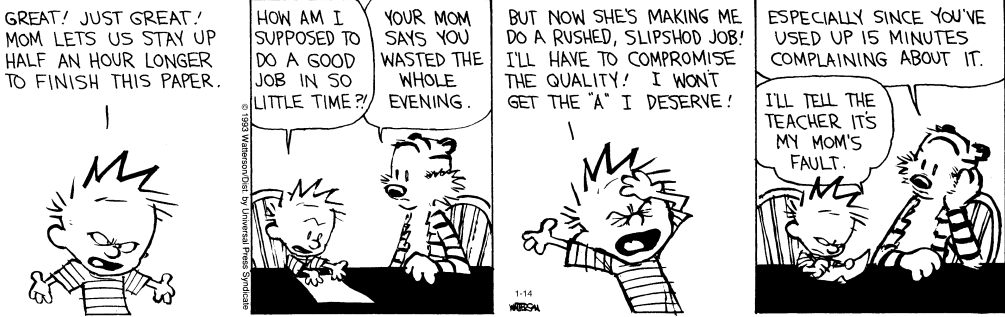
(Need advice? Check out Eugenia on the Web at www.astroadvice.com or www.eugenialast.com.)

Ziggy®



Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Watterson



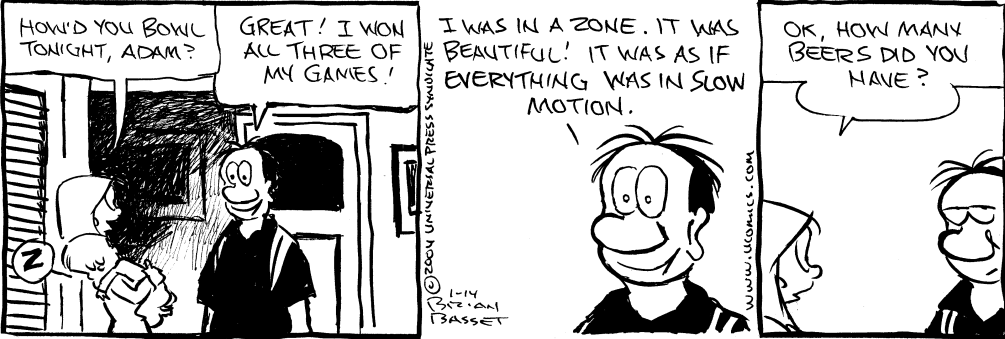
Garfield®

by Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Brian Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



Glenn Robinson scores 22 in 76ers victory

PHILADELPHIA (AP)— Glenn Robinson scored a season-high 22 points, and Eric Snow added 14 points and 14 assists to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 95-73 victory Monday night over the Orlando Magic.

Robinson bounced back from a 2-for-10, 4-point game a day earlier against Boston.

Kyle Korver had 16 points for the 76ers, who blew the game open with a 22-3 run in the fourth quarter. Aaron McKie had 14 points for Philadelphia, 9-of-20 from beyond the arc. Korver was 4-for-10 and McKie 3-for-5.

Iverson missed his fifth straight game with a swollen right knee, Derrick Coleman did not play with a left knee sprain, and Kenny Thomas left during the second quarter with flu-like symptoms.

Jazz 92, Bulls 80

In Chicago, Andrei Kirilenko had 26 points and a career-high 16 rebounds to lead Utah to its 11th victory in the last 12 meetings with Chicago.

Matt Harpring also had a double-double, finishing with 15 points and 14 rebounds for the Jazz, who wrapped up a six-game road trip with a .500

record. They won despite turning the ball over 26 times.

The Bulls sure made it interesting, though. Trailing by 20 early in the third quarter, they went on a furious rally and cut Utah's lead to 79-72 on a fast break dunk by Corie Blount with 3:46 to play. But they couldn't get any closer, and were forced to foul the Jazz down the stretch.

Chicago, which has lost three straight, and seven of its last nine, was led by Kendall Gill with 13 points. He was one of six Bulls in double figures.

Nuggets 106, Grizzlies 99

In Denver, Voshon Lenard scored 24 points, Andre Miller had 21 points and 10 assists, and Denver won for the 17th time — matching its total for all of last season.

The Nuggets opened the fourth quarter with a 14-4 run for a 95-84 lead. Memphis cut the deficit to four points with 1:25 left but got no closer.

Nene added 16 points and Carmelo Anthony 15 for Denver, which shot 51 percent compared to Memphis' 47 percent. Pau Gasol led the Grizzlies with 24 points and 14 rebounds, and James Posey added 20 points.

Orlando Magic's Tracy McGrady, right, blocks a shot by Philadelphia 76ers' Glenn Robinson during the first half Monday, Dec. 22, 2003, in Philadelphia



NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	14	14	.500	-
Philadelphia	14	14	.500	-
New Jersey	13	13	.500	-
Miami	10	17	.370	3 1/2
New York	10	18	.357	4
Washington	8	17	.320	4 1/2
Orlando	7	22	.241	7 1/2

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	20	8	.714	-
New Orleans	18	10	.643	2
Detroit	16	11	.593	3 1/2
Toronto	14	13	.519	5 1/2
Milwaukee	13	14	.481	6 1/2
Cleveland	8	19	.296	11 1/2
Chicago	7	19	.269	12
Atlanta	7	22	.241	13 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	19	10	.655	-
Minnesota	17	9	.654	1/2
Denver	17	11	.607	1 1/2
Dallas	15	11	.577	2 1/2
Houston	15	11	.577	2 1/2
Memphis	15	12	.556	3
Utah	15	13	.536	3 1/2

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	20	5	.800	-
Sacramento	19	6	.760	1
Golden State	12	13	.480	8
Portland	12	13	.480	8
Seattle	12	13	.480	8
L.A. Clippers	11	12	.478	8
Phoenix	10	18	.357	11 1/2

By Associated Press

UConn., Kentucky, Duke stay as top three

By JIM O'CONNELL
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

For a change, there was no change at the top of The Associated Press men's college basketball poll.

After four straight weeks of new No. 1s, Connecticut held on to the top spot Monday after winning its only game last week by 50 points over Iona.

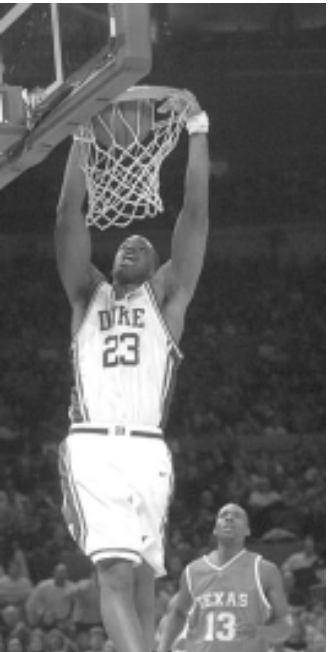
For the second straight week No. 2 Kentucky had more first-place votes than Connecticut, but the Huskies received more points from the national media panel. Duke remained third.

Georgia Tech moved up one spot to fourth, its highest ranking since February 1986, and Vanderbilt moved into the poll at No. 25, its first appearance in the Top 25 since February 2000.

The Huskies (8-1) received 21 first-place votes and 1,636 points, 22 more than the Wildcats (6-0), who were No. 1 on 25 ballots. Kentucky beat Indiana 80-41 on Saturday.

Duke (8-1), which beat then-No. 11 Texas 89-61 on Saturday, had two first-place votes and 1,539 points.

Georgia Tech (10-0) had 16 first-place votes. Arizona, which moved from seventh to



Duke University's Sheldon Williams dunks as University of Texas' Sydmill Harris (13) looks on during the second half Saturday, Dec. 20, 2003, at New York's Madison Square Garden. Williams had 14 points and four blocks as Duke won the game, 89-61.

fifth, and Stanford, which jumped from ninth to sixth, each had two first-place votes.

Oklahoma moved up one spot to seventh and Wake Forest, which received the other No. 1 vote, went from No. 14 to No. 8 after its 119-114 triple-overtime win at North Carolina, which dropped five places to ninth.

Saint Joseph's and Missouri switched places at 10th and 11th and Kansas, which lost 75-61 at Nevada on Sunday night, fell from sixth to No. 12.

Florida was 13th and was followed by Cincinnati, Gonzaga, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Texas, Wisconsin and Louisville.

The last five ranked teams were Illinois, Purdue, Dayton, Maryland and Vanderbilt.

The Commodores (8-0) are off to their best start since 1973-74 when they won their first 10 games. This season's biggest wins have been over Michigan and Indiana.

Marquette (7-2) fell out of the rankings for the first time since January 2002 following its 63-59 loss to Wisconsin on Saturday. The Golden Eagles were 23rd last week.

Wake Forest's jump of five spots was the biggest gain of the week, while Texas' drop from a tie for 11th to No. 18 following the loss to Duke at Madison Square Garden, was the biggest drop.

There are three meetings between ranked teams this week. On Tuesday, No. 23 Dayton is at No. 14 Cincinnati, and No. 21 Illinois plays No. 11 Missouri at St. Louis. On Saturday, No. 20 Louisville is at No. 2 Kentucky.

NY Knicks fire Layden, hire Thomas

NEW YORK (AP)—In a change of leadership that almost no one at Madison Square Garden saw coming, Scott Layden was fired Monday as president of the New York Knicks and was replaced by Isiah Thomas.

The move comes after New York missed the playoffs the past two seasons with a roster largely assembled by Layden. The Knicks are 10-18 this season, and recent speculation centered on coach Don Chaney possibly losing his job.

Instead, the man forced out was Layden, who joined the Knicks in the summer of 1999 after they were coming off an appearance in the NBA Finals.

"I don't think there's any question that everybody is underperforming. Just look at our record," said James Dolan, the chairman of the team's corporate owner, Cablevision. "This is the thing we could do right now to most help the team. That's the bottom line of it."

Thomas has been out of the NBA since being fired over the summer by the Indiana Pacers, where he was the coach for three seasons. He received a phone call from Dolan and Garden president Steve Mills on Friday, then spent Saturday meeting with them.

He was introduced at a press conference in the same Garden restaurant where Layden made his first public appearance as the

Knicks' general manager 4 1/2 years ago.

"We've got players and coaches probably a little bit unsure of what's going on, and my job is to come here and calm the waters," Thomas said.

Calming the waters, however, could be a tough task after Thomas emphasized in several recent interviews that his desire is to return to coaching. That might not bode well for Chaney, who has been coaching the Knicks throughout their decline into insignificance.

Thomas said everyone in the organization will be evaluated, providing no assurances to anyone. Chaney did not speak to reporters after practice Monday morning.

Thomas' first look at his new team will come Tuesday night when former Knick Latrell Sprewell and the Minnesota Timberwolves visit New York.

The task confronting Thomas is a difficult one, whether he tries to tinker with or overhaul an underachieving roster with the league's highest payroll. The contracts of Allan Houston, Keith Van Horn, Howard Eisley and Shandon Anderson will take up almost all of the team's salary cap space for the next three seasons.

"Everyone who looks at the cap situation, the first thing they say is, 'You can't fix this, you

can't do it,'" Thomas said. "We have to be a team that's very unconventional and very creative in going out and getting players."

Layden's last major move was the four-team trade that sent Sprewell to Minnesota and brought Van Horn to New York. The deal has appeared to favor the Timberwolves during the first two months of the season. Sprewell has averaged 17.2 points for Minnesota while Van Horn has struggled, averaging 14.8 points and getting benched for the fourth quarter of several recent games.

Before the Van Horn trade, Layden's biggest move came on draft night in 2002 when he sent Marcus Camby, Mark Jackson and the Knicks' lottery pick—which turned into Brazilian center Nene—to Denver for Antonio McDyess.

McDyess fractured his kneecap in an exhibition game and missed the entire 2002-03 season, finally returning 11 games ago.

With the Knicks losing regularly and failing to draw the sellout crowds that were a staple during the 1990s, Layden became a lightning rod for criticism. The anti-Layden feeling was so strong in New York that when LeBron James was selected with the No. 1 pick in the draft at the Garden last June, commissioner David Stern's announcement of the selection was drowned out by a loud chant of "Fire Layden!"





**Jones, Pangelinan
score win in Shell 4.0**
A cameo appearance by the sun over the weekend resulted in the conclusion of three of the five doubles divisions of the 2002 Shell Tennis Open Championship.

27

Saipan Tribune

Sports



**Baseball union may
set strike date**
With little evidence of progress toward a labor contract, baseball players could set a strike date as early as next week to pressure owners into making a deal.

25